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THE SUNDAY TIMES *magazine*



THIS WEEK IN 1978

Policemen join the dancers at the Notting Hill Carnival in August 1978. The event in west London, which takes place today and tomorrow, celebrates Caribbean culture and has run every year since 1966, apart from two years during the pandemic. This playful image was captured for The Times by the photographer Brian Harris.

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CHARLOTTE IVERS

Mindfulness only makes me anxious. Better to tune in than zone out

You are on a beach. Breathe in. Can you feel the sand between your toes? Can you hear the waves going in and out? In. And out. In. And out. Can you feel the sun on your skin? You should be able to, you are on a beach. I cannot stress enough how much you are on a beach.

I'm not on the beach with you, by the way. I'm lying on the floor in a south London yoga studio, thinking about the fact that I will die one day. Now I'm also thinking about a mild embarrassment I caused myself in September 2007, and that very memory is making me grateful for my own mortality. Maybe I should get a new haircut. Maybe I should get a new life entirely.

This is what happens every time I try to "practise mindfulness", as the jargon has it. I'm sure it works well for some. Everyone seems to be at it. Even the least woo-woo people I know have a little app on their phone that tells them how to breathe. I am not one of them. I don't need someone to tell me how to breathe, because I — highly intelligent person that I am — have been doing it on my own initiative for years.

Now look, I'm sounding dismissive and I don't want to. There's probably something in all of this stuff. There have been scientific studies that prove the benefits of sitting quietly, having a really long think about how your lungs are operating. I know this because I participated in one of those studies back when I was an undergraduate. The aim was to see whether practising mindfulness improved our organisational skills and ability to keep appointments. Did it work? I'm the wrong person to ask. I went to the first session and forgot to turn up to the rest.

I tell people this whenever they try to convert me to the True Path of Righteousness that is being mindful. They tend to be unimpressed. Am I not a bundle of nerves? Is my brain not constantly whirring and sparking like an old computer about to pack in? Not really. There is more than one way to find a peaceful state of mind. I'm worried that in

And breathe...

our rush towards mindfulness we have lost sight of something that can be even better for our mental health: a state I have taken to calling mindlessness. The thing is, the times when I find myself the most completely at peace, the least distracted by worries or anxieties, are the times when I am completely and utterly focused on a task. Maybe I'm halfway through a gripping book, or writing an article on a short deadline, or deeply caught up in an intense conversation with a friend.

There's jargon for this too: it's called a flow state. When you are passionately caught up in an activity you care about, your brain shuts down all of its whingeing and whirring. All that matters is what is in front of you.

There is a case, I think, for trying to achieve this state when you are sad or stressed. Recently, as part of a sensible societal correction towards taking our mental health more seriously, a trend has emerged for protecting one's wellbeing by taking time to sit and be quiet. We stay home from work on mental health days and bail on arrangements we have made with our friends to "protect our energy". And sometimes that might be necessary, particularly for those who are really suffering. But for me, and I suspect for many people, it may often be better to keep moving.

"You'll enjoy it once you are there" is something my mother used to say to me when I was young and dreading some excursion or other. When it comes to this particular bit of advice, I have followed the same pattern as I have with nearly everything my mum told me as a teenager. Then: "Mummm, shut uppp. You don't understand me, or indeed the historically unique circumstances of my despair. Nobody has suffered as I do." Now: I repeat her advice to friends and pass it off as my own. "You'll enjoy it once we're there."

"There" might be the gym, or it might be a party or the pub. I'm almost always right. There is a strong case to be made for distracting yourself when you are down, or when you don't feel like leaving a darkened room. There is also a strong case for being around other people or doing a task for other people. It makes the world feel bigger — and your own problems smaller.

There's nothing wrong with being mindful. It helps a lot of people. Who knows — it could help me too, if only I stopped thinking about getting my hair cut. But in our rush to serenity, we should not underestimate the power of being mindless. Life is not a beach. And that's fine ■

An app to tell me how to breathe? I've been doing it on my own for years

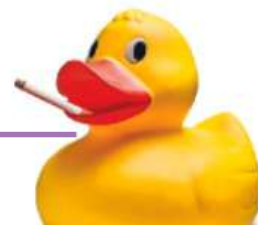
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WILL LLOYD

I've found a way to stop vaping in the bath. I'm back on the fags

You might struggle to see what Kate Moss and I have in common. The parallels are thin. She was recently dating somebody 13 years younger than her with the ominous surname “von Bismarck”. Google him: the apple fell quite far from the Prussian tree, didn't it? I am... single. Kate ornaments magazine covers; I write some things that go inside them. Kate is the face of Diet Coke; I recycle Diet Coke cans. Actually, one point of symmetry does emerge: we both have great legs. Scandalously Kate has reaped far greater rewards from society than I have for my pins.

But the distance between us grows. After at least three nicotine-stained decades, a period when she was described as “the greatest smoker of all time”, Kate is said to be giving up cigarettes. Replacing them? A cherry, peach and lemonade-flavoured e-cigarette. Kate, for once, is getting everything wrong.

My first vape looked like a steampunk wand. It was fragile, erratic and leaky. You charged it up, an iPhone that puffed out volcanic smoke. I believed it would save me from cigarettes. I packed the wand in my bag before a long flight to Thailand. When I arrived in Bangkok, desperate — groaning! — for nicotine, I found that the wand had given up on life and decided to explode. Everything I owned was stinked with caramel vape fluid. That night I dried out a soiled copy of *The Moonstone* on a ledge overlooking the Khao San Road. Technology had failed me. I bought a pack of cigarettes.

But vapes improved. Enter the Elf Bar, a snubby, disposable Chinese-made vape that never self-detonates. The Elf Bar is close to the perfect product: economical, addictive, available everywhere. I ditched the fags. For the past 18 months an Elf Bar was always in my hand or my mouth. I mean *always* in my hand or my mouth. Unlike cigarettes, you can smoke them anywhere. At funerals, on a vaporetto, in a boardroom, inside the royal enclosure at Ascot.

A penumbra of flavoured cloud followed me everywhere, like a loyal dog. Spent Elf Bars covered my bedroom floor and my desk at work. I would wake

up at 4am, have ten drags on one, then return to bed. I was vaping in between forkfuls at restaurants and vaping on the lavatory. I did not vape in the shower, but that's not to say I never tried. Vaping in the bath was easy. An Elf Bar slept under my pillow, as James Bond's Walther PPK does. (You can decide which is sexier.)

I was a 29-year-old man bewitched by a product condemned for being marketed at children. I was an overgrown baby with a pacifier. Was there a last straw? Maybe watching a tearful, trembling, confessional Phillip Schofield being interviewed a few months ago, clutching his colourful vape in the manner of a guilty nun clinging to her rosary beads. Not, in other words, aspirational. Or maybe it was this: the last Elf Bar tasted awful. Vimto mixed with unwashed armpit.

To give up vaping I decided to start smoking again. This sounds wrong. It sounds like letting the grass grow to mow the lawn. Or sailing from Southampton to New York in order to cross the Pacific. The entire point of vapes is that they're the way you finally jettison the cigarettes. This is not a health column, but I do understand nicotine. It is a flawless drug: you want nicotine, you have nicotine, the desire goes away: repeat. No hangover, no dissociations, no vomiting. Nicotine never made anybody do something stupid. But a nicotine delivery system as flawlessly engineered as the Elf Bar turns an addict into a slave.

So I'm smoking once more. I dug out an old notebook, wheezing with earnest quotes I had kept about cigarettes. “Life is an unpleasant affair that we can get through by means of smoking.” (Robert Musil). “But this is what I wanted; to smoke cigarettes, drink coffee and look at the world.” (Don DeLillo). “Someone said to me once that a cigarette at the right moment is better than all the ideals in the world.” (Erich Maria Remarque). Few of them mention the increased laundry costs that accompany smelling like a pub ashtray all the time. Few of them could have imagined a packet of 20 cigarettes costing £15, as they do today.

I do not think smoking is cool, but it will never be as lame as vaping. Nor is smoking a political statement; funnelling your wages to British American Tobacco is not an expression of personal liberty. This is what professional smoking advocates — they really exist — claim. Yes, smoking will kill me, but in a predictable way. Vaping will probably kill people too, just in ways we don't understand yet. Kate Moss will eventually realise this. I expect to see her in a newspaper any day now with one in the corner of her mouth. Then, legs aside, we will have something else in common ■

Matt Rudd is away. Will Lloyd is a commissioning editor and writer at The New Statesman

I would wake up at 4am, have ten drags on an Elf Bar, then return to bed

RELATIVE VALUES

Freya and Richard Ridings

The singer-songwriter and her father, the actor who voices Daddy Pig

Freya

The input Dad has had on my career is incomparable. My earliest memories are of him sitting in the kitchen playing guitar, listening to John Martyn and James Taylor, encouraging me to plonk around on the piano. Even watching *Top of the Pops*, he'd get so passionate. We weren't a religious family, but there was something spiritual about Dad's connection with music.

Music also became a place of solace for me. I was bullied a lot at school — the weird ginger kid who didn't have any friends, plus I was dyslexic. Being at school drained so much of my emotional energy that I became anaemic. Instead of going to school to learn stuff, I felt as though I was simply trying to get people to like me.

When I was eventually kicked down the stairs by a kid, Mum and Dad decided it was time to find a new school. Things were better, but the only time I truly felt happy was when I was at home listening to music with Mum and Dad or writing songs on the piano — and the older I got, the more powerful music felt.

Dad was always my biggest supporter. When I started playing open-mike nights, he was the one who drove me there and back. Freeing up that time wasn't easy for an actor. His job might mean three weeks in the Czech Republic or working with George Lucas on *The Adventures of Young Indiana Jones* in Hollywood. I saw Dad get gassed in *Indiana Jones* and started screaming at my mum, "Daddy's been killed!" Mum said, "Don't be silly, he's upstairs in bed."

People always assumed that because my dad was on telly, we were millionaires. No: we had a two-bedroom flat in north London. Me and my brother slept in bunk beds and at one point I was sleeping on a mattress. The fact is that Dad could have worked more, but he turned down jobs because he wanted to carry my guitar and keyboard. Whatever money and time he had was always directed towards the family.

Dad has been involved with some amazing stuff, but Daddy Pig is the one that's had the biggest impact all over the world. Quentin Tarantino called *Peppa Pig* the greatest British import of the decade. There have even been reports that so many American kids are listening to the show that they're adopting the accent. In the same way that music makes Dad happy, so does the look of joy on children's faces when they hear his voice.

There were times when I wanted to give up on music, but Dad would always know what to say. He would play my song *Lost Without You* and tell me it was going to change my world. Turns out he was right — it appeared on *Love Island* in 2018, went into the Top Ten and helped me get nominated for a Brit two years later. Some people are snobbish about the show, but I think

of it as relationship football, all the players showing off their skills. It's my go-to evening wind-down treat.

When I was flying to Australia for my first tour, I was trying to find something to watch on the little telly and I noticed they had *Peppa Pig*. If I'm missing home and family, I always put it on. The bizarre thing is that Daddy Pig is a fairly authentic version of my dad — he loves chocolate cake, he's funny and usually breaks things when he's trying to mend them. Mum and Dad were friends with one of the guys who came up with the show and I often wonder if he looked at my dad and thought, "That's him... that's Daddy Pig."

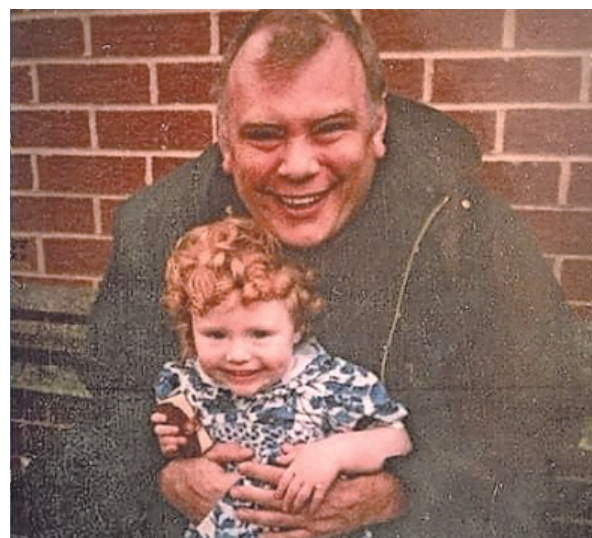
Richard

My wife, Cathy, and I held off for a good ten years before having kids. We were in London having a great time, but were also very aware that acting isn't the most financially secure profession. Cathy eventually became a writer, but I can confirm that acting still has a huge element of insecurity.

I was 36 and about to start work on a show called *Common as Muck* with Tim Healy, Edward Woodward and Roy Hudd when Freya arrived. Poor Cathy's labour was so long that I had to leave her to it. To be honest, Cathy ended up doing most of the hard work for the



"Daddy Pig is quite like my dad — he's funny and breaks things when he's trying to mend them"



Above: Peppa Pig's Daddy Pig, who is voiced by Richard. Main: Richard, 64, and Freya, 29, in a north London park. Right: in 1996



first few years. I was trying to earn enough money to buy nappies and keep a roof over our heads.

Freya was a force of nature. We started inventing all these different characters and games to try to maintain the energy of this world she was creating. It got to the point where she used to find school a bit boring. The dyslexia meant that she struggled with some subjects and unfortunately the school system wasn't geared up for a "creative" approach to learning. When she did her music exam, she actually wrote a piece for piano. She was only eight! The teacher gave her a lower grade because she hadn't played one of the accepted exam pieces. Sorry, Rishi, but more maths isn't the way forward. If schools valued creativity a bit more, the country would be a nicer place to live.

It's an awful moment when you find out your child is being bullied. As a parent, you complain and you try to change things, but you quickly realise that you're up against a system that is ludicrously underfunded. Obviously we worried about Freya, but it also made us hyper-aware of just how important music was to her. She was having to deal with all this awful stuff, then she'd sit down at the piano and her entire demeanour would change — and she pulled out this voice that really touched people. I remember taking her to an

STRANGE HABITS

Freya on Richard
He's got the weirdest favourite sandwich in the world: mature cheddar and raspberry jam

Richard on Freya
Her godfather is Tony Dolan, the former lead singer of the Satanic metal band Venom

open-mike night at a college and there were only about 20 of us there... until she started singing. Suddenly, 150 people came tumbling out of the bar.

I suppose my voice has become my trademark too. As well as acting, I do a lot of voiceover work and have spent 20-odd years as Daddy Pig. When parents know it's me, they sometimes ask me to come and say hello to their youngster, but I generally say no because I don't want to destroy the magic. I get the parents to tell them, "If you close your eyes, Daddy Pig will come and talk to you." It's the best bit of the job — my voice makes people smile. The children generally want to know why Daddy Pig is in a shop, so I tell them I'm buying some new boots to go muddy-puddle jumping.

It has been wonderful to witness Freya's success over the past few years, but I'm not surprised. When *Lost Without You* became a hit I felt like saying, "I told you so." Every parent finds it hard to be objective about their kids because you naturally think everything they do is brilliant. But I've seen the effect Freya's music has on people. She has a very special gift ■

Interviews by Danny Scott.

Freya Ridings's new album, *Blood Orange*, is out now. For tour details visit freyaridings.com. A new series of *Peppa Pig* is planned for this autumn

"WE WILL



BE FREE"

A year ago women in Iran risked death, rape and blinding by taking part in mass protests. They were brutally crushed. Now they're engaged in a quieter revolution. *Christina Lamb reports*

Thousands of protesters gather in Saqqez, northwest Iran, in September 2022 for the funeral of Mahsa Amini, 22, who died after being arrested by the "morality" police



IT

looks like an ordinary shopping mall. Women riding escalators, holding up clothes in boutiques, trying out lipsticks, chatting and tossing their hair. But hang on a minute. The Opal shopping centre is in Tehran, capital of Iran, land of compulsory hijab, and no one is wearing a headscarf.

Not far away in Parvaz Park, three girls in baggy trousers and T-shirts are dancing and waving their hair for a TikTok video, surrounded by people. Also filming herself is a middle-aged mother in trousers, ponytail swinging as she wanders the streets sticking up posters of her 16-year-old son, who was killed by security forces, as well as those of other young victims. As fast as she can put them up they are removed by guards.

Next month marks a year since the death in custody of the 22-year-old Mahsa Amini that triggered months of mass women-led protests across Iran. It was, it seemed, the world's first "women's revolution" — and the biggest threat the country's theocratic regime has ever faced. For months women headed out onto the streets knowing any one of them could end up like those whose imprisonment, rape or execution they heard about daily. Their bravery was both humbling and terrifying. Even schoolgirls took part, filming themselves putting their middle fingers up to the omnipresent photos of the supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, or "turban tipping" — running up to clerics and knocking off their headgear.

Eventually, after 22,000 arrests, more than 500 killed, seven executions, hundreds of protesters wounded or blinded with shotgun pellets and thousands of schoolgirls poisoned in attacks that the authorities were accused of failing to investigate properly, the protests subsided. To the outside world it might seem it is all over. But the defiance of Iranian women continues — in a new form.

As many as one in five women in the Iranian capital are not wearing hijab — a quiet revolution in a country where women have had to cover their entire body except their faces and hands for 40 years. Iran is the only country where this is enforced, apart from Afghanistan under the Taliban. Now it is as if a tap has been turned.

"There's no going back," Leyla, 23, an assistant at a boutique in Tehran, vows. "I have burnt all my hijabs."

"I see girls back home in T-shirts and wonder, could I be that brave?" says Elham, a young Iranian who now lives in the UK.

With the anniversary of Mahsa's death approaching, a new hashtag — #MahsaDay — is circulating and further protests are expected. In preparation the morality police, who for a while disappeared from the streets, are back in force in their ubiquitous green and white vans. A new "Hijab and Chastity" campaign has been launched by the regime, using thousands of CCTV cameras and facial recognition to identify those walking or driving without the "correct" attire.

By July more than a million women had already been sent SMS messages for driving without hijab and more than 100,000 have had their cars confiscated for two weeks. Thousands of businesses have been fined and some shut down for female staff not covering up. Yet the women don't stop. Billboards for the chastity campaign are regularly set on fire. Every night protesters stand on their rooftops and yell "Women, life, freedom!" or "Death to the dictator!"

"It's like a flame under the ashes — not yet fully erupted but it has begun and won't

stop," says Elaheh, a female GP in the city of Shiraz who secretly treated injured protesters last year. "We will be free, it's just a matter of how and when."

The regime has not allowed western journalists in to see for themselves. But four women who took part in the protests have risked their lives over the past year to tell how their stories of rebellion continue.

Sharzad, 21: "We wear skinny dresses"

As an engineering student and feminist in Qom, Iran's most religious city, Sharzad has never gone for the easy option. "There's a 50-50 mix in my uni of sexes but we know as women we will not get the same job opportunities or salary as the men anyway, so we deliberately chose 'men's subjects'."

Like many Iranian women she has grown up living a double life. "We wear hijab out but behind closed doors we wear skinny dresses and use VPNs [virtual private networks] to circumvent all the regime's restrictions so we can watch *Emily in Paris* or *Black Mirror*."

Last autumn, instead of exchanging ideas on fashion and streaming, they found themselves swapping tips on wearing kickboxer pads to protect against beatings or dipping masks in lemon juice to counteract the tear gas. "We all wanted to do something as we were shocked by Mahsa's death and annoyed at ourselves for being quiet and allowing this to happen," Sharzad explains. "I will never forget seeing that photo on Insta..."

She is referring to images on Instagram (Twitter and Facebook are banned in Iran) of Mahsa lying in a coma, tubes in her mouth and face badly swollen after apparently being beaten by morality police. Mahsa had been picked up on Tuesday, September 13, for "bad hijab" as she came out of a metro station, bundled into a van and taken to a re-education centre.

"She was a student like us. She had come from Kurdistan and just been visiting her brother in Tehran to celebrate her 23rd birthday before going off to university. When she complained about her arrest, they beat her. She never got to see her birthday."

When news spread on Friday, September 16, that she was dead, crowds gathered around the hospital in Tehran. Claims from the regime that she had gone into a diabetic coma or suffered a heart attack inflamed the anger. Mahsa's funeral that Saturday in her



Mahsa Amini's mother, top, grieves at her graveside. The 22-year-old was left in a coma and died after her arrest and detention in Tehran



Nasibe Samsaei, an Iranian living in Turkey, cuts off her hair in a symbol of protest outside the Iranian consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, September 2022

home town of Saqqez in northwest Iran was attended by thousands of fellow Kurds shouting, “Death to the dictator!” Her mother wailed over her gravestone on which was engraved “Mahsa, you didn’t die, your name became a symbol”. Her name would become one of the most tweeted hashtags in history.

The protests spread to 139 cities in all 31 provinces of Iran. In Qom, Sharzad and her student friends were the first on the streets. “In the beginning there were 30 of us women, who stood in front of regime forces chanting ‘Women, life, freedom’, and one boy. But then 30 became 100, 100 became 200, 200 became 300 and more men joined us. It was not thousands like in Tehran, as Qom is such a conservative place.

“People said it was about hijab,” Sharzad says. “But really it’s about choice. I want to be able to choose what I wear, what music I listen to, what religion I choose to practise. Right from birth we’re constantly struggling for freedom.”

Famous actors and sports stars joined in, removing their hijabs on the international stage. Protesters even had a song: *Baraye*, Persian for “Because of...”, a haunting ballad listing grievances recorded by Shervin Hajipour, one of Iran’s most famous singers, who soon found himself under arrest.

With inflation hitting 50 per cent and the rial falling to a record low against the dollar, protesters were joined by those with other

“I SAW WOMEN BEATEN IN THE FACE, BLEEDING FROM PELLETS IN THEIR EYES. NURSES HAD TO GO SECRETLY TO TREAT THEM”

grievances. People were angry about corruption and economic mismanagement. In an educated country with one of the world’s largest oil reserves, many are unable to afford meat, while the powerful Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) live well.

At first Ayatollah Khamenei, 84, dismissed the protests as the “work of foreign enemies” and began to round up journalists and further restrict the internet. But the crackdown became vicious. Young people began disappearing off the streets, such as Nika Shakarami, 16, whose parents were told she and others had thrown themselves off a roof. Some who were detained and then

freed died within days, leading their families to suspect they had been injected with drugs. Many were raped by guards.

Sharzad and her friends knew the risks. “I saw scenes at the beginning that traumatised me,” she says. “Women beaten in the face, bleeding from pellets in their eyes. Some of my friends are studying nursing but were not allowed to treat the injured, so found out where they lived and went secretly to treat them.

“Many of my friends were imprisoned. On the way to detention centres guards put their hands round girls’ private parts to create fear and made comments about what they would like to do to them.”

Prosecutions were issued for “waging war against God” — a religious crime that carries the death penalty. In December executions began, starting with Mohsen Shekari, 22, a male barista — the first of seven known executions. Seven other protesters are still on death row.

Despite all this Sharzad kept going out, buoyed by local support. “During protests shopkeepers let us run in and protected us, letting us sneak out the back even if guards broke all their windows.”

Sharzad’s parents were beside themselves with fear. “They got my grandmother to call me to beg me not to go, as we are close. But I tell them this is not the life I want to live. I have no choice but to go out. As a 21-year-old girl I am not asking for something ➤

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Left: female students take off their hijabs and show contempt for a portrait of the former leader Ayatollah Khomeini, left, and Ayatollah Khamenei, October 2022. Below: schoolgirls hospitalised after suspected poisonings

SCHOOLGIRLS STARTED “TURBAN TIPPING” — RUNNING UP TO CLERICS AND KNOCKING OFF THEIR HEADGEAR

big, just the smallest thing — to be treated with respect, not as a second-class citizen. When I walk in the streets and see little girls of five or six, I think I’m doing this for you, I want you to have a normal life.”

Sharzad insists the rebellion continues. “Now we are finding different ways to protest — for a start not wearing hijab. Before no one would support you but now, even in Qom, people won’t let the IRGC stop you. Recently I went somewhere with my hair uncovered and a woman had a go at me, saying, ‘You’re disgusting,’ and that she would photograph me. I said, ‘OK, take it,’ then lots of people gathered and said to her, ‘Go on, take a picture’ — and in the end she put her phone down and left.”

She shrugs. “There are many ups and downs in a revolution. They have put up a lot of [CCTV] cameras, particularly around uni, and sometimes I wear hijab just to be able to get on with things without being harassed, but I remind myself, no, people have lost their lives because of this. The fight is still on and we must keep going.”

Leyla, 23: “I had a gag on my mouth”

“I guess we realised anger is not enough,” says Leyla, who studies languages and works in a boutique in Tehran, where she says no one now wears hijab. “But we have so much anger.”

She can still feel the man’s breath on her neck from last October when she was arrested and sexually assaulted. “I was with five friends — three girls and two boys — when we noticed a petrol station with its lights off and so many vans of Ershad [the morality police]. We started turning back, then we saw a group of security forces coming, so we ran. They ran after us and



grabbed me and the boys, tying my hands in a cuff so I couldn’t move and a gag on my mouth so I couldn’t scream, and a sack over my head.

“They took us into the back of the petrol station. They took off my gold necklace and said, ‘You’re not allowed gold in the detention centre.’ They also took my phone. Then they took off the sack and bundled us into a van, which was mostly men apart from one other girl, who I thought was one of them as she seemed weird, trying to be friends but I think trying to get info. The men kept saying dirty things and when I said anything back they punched me in the face. One man kept rubbing me sexually.

“After about half an hour they stopped, took us into a room and the girl disappeared. Two men came in and interrogated me. One asked, ‘Are you a leader of the protests?’ while the guy behind was hitting me. Then they demanded the pin for my phone, threatening, ‘We will put you in Fashafuyeh prison and give your skin and bones to your family.’ I was forced to give the pin and they went through all my

messages from my boyfriend. Then they took off the blindfold and asked me to sign or fingerprint a paper. I refused but they kept beating me, breathing close to me and saying sexual things.” On camera she was forced to confess she was a leader and her ID card was taken. “All this went on for hours and I could hear the boys screaming — they were using electric prods on them.”

Eventually she was taken into another room by two women dressed in chadors. “They made us remove all our clothes, then patted us down and took us back to the men. One of them kept touching my hip bones and said, ‘You’re such a skinny little girl — you need to put on some fat to be more attractive.’”

The women put them back in the van with blacked-out windows. “They were just driving round and round in circles. I heard a man say to the chadori woman, ‘What about that knife?’ — then I was screaming. What were they going to do? The car stopped and the woman said, ‘We’re now going to take you and throw you off the cliff.’ One of the men said, ‘Let’s have some fun with her before we kill her.’ They took me out. By then I had accepted I was going to die. They took off my handcuffs and told me to count to 70 and by the end you’ll be dead. I was howling, crying, begging God — let my death be as painless as possible. I got to 20 and then I heard an engine. They had gone.”

But then she heard motorbikes driven by men with masks — the much-feared Basij militia of the IRGC. Fortunately a car stopped, seeing her in distress, and she begged the driver to take her home. It was after 4am when she arrived, terrified. “For two weeks I couldn’t go out, couldn’t go to classes or work and couldn’t sleep. I kept ➤



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having nightmares. When I did start to go out I was convinced I was being followed.”

Initially Leyla didn’t go back to the protests. But after a few months she began to attend some, which by then were much smaller. She burnt all her hijabs.

“I’ll never wear hijab again,” she insists. “There’s lots of CCTV and a few times I was driving without hijab and they sent a text, warning, ‘You should abide by compulsory hijab.’ If I get another one they can confiscate my car, but I don’t pay attention. If they take it I will just get taxis.”

Iran is a young country, with 60 per cent of its 89 million people under 30 — and Generation Z were at the forefront of protests. But older women are joining in too. “Even my mother no longer wears hijab,” Leyla says. “It’s a 180-degree change.”

Leyla is now avidly learning English. “For me it’s black and white,” she says. “Either the regime is toppled or I’m out of here — there’s no life for me as things are.”

Anna, 38: “I am risking my life”

“The last year has been an awakening,” says Anna, a former sports champion who teaches PE in Tehran and is a mother of two. “There is no war in the streets here, but I see now that we have been under psychological warfare, living under this sinister shadow where you expect humiliation while shopping, walking, even in the park where children are playing. Simply by sending out this diary I am risking my life,” she says.

She started writing it shortly after Mahsa’s death. In one of her first entries, on September 22, she wrote: “I saw this professor of social sciences at Tehran University saying on TV that ‘the slogan of rioters is women, prostitution, lewdness’, and it made my blood boil. I shared the clip and added a caption: ‘I can see the worms in his rotten brain. I’m sorry for a country where such a creature is a master of the university.’ The internet was so slow it took me a hundred tries to share the post.”

When the news of Mahsa’s death was followed a few days later by that of 16-year-old Nika Shakarami, Anna and her friends decided to join the protests. On the evening of October 3 they met up in Mellat Park.

“There are ten of us,” she wrote in her diary. “We are all heartbroken and angry... After the park we drove to Vali-e Asr Street to join the protests, our cars in a row to support each other. There were security forces on either side of the road but there were cars all the way along that beautiful street to Tajrish Square, people honking their horns. The song *Baraye* is blasting from most of the cars.

“The girls have taken off their scarves and are waving them outside of their cars. Two girls in an MVM [an Iranian car] are singing songs and shouting, ‘Women, life, freedom!’ Motorcyclists are also chanting away. The roundabout near Tajrish Square is full of



**“MY LITTLE BOY SAID,
‘MUM, I DREAMT THEY
KILLED YOU AND I GOT
KILLED TOO. YOU
BROUGHT FLOWERS
TO MY GRAVE”**

Top: the feared morality police patrol in distinctive vans to enforce dress codes.

Below: a woman on the front line of protests in Tehran, September 2022



security forces and they’re getting ready. They are wearing black masks with their faces covered. They looked like killers from old movies and are ready to kill.

“All of a sudden they charge towards the MVM car with those two girls. They use their batons to break the windows, but the cars around start honking so much that it can make the skies deaf! The car with the two girls starts moving and gets lost in the heavy traffic. There are so many people, the security forces are not brave enough.”

Her diary entries grew more furious as she logged a number of killings. On November 27 she wrote: “Last night Hamidreza Rouhi, a 19-year-old model, was shot dead on his motorbike near our home. What a boy, full of life’s passion... his face was all over social media... Our hearts are aching. Till the morning I kept thinking of Kian [a nine-year-old boy who was killed] and Hamidreza and their bereaved families, and I cried and cried. Today Kian was buried. His mother gave a speech to everyone at the cemetery and said, ‘I’ll tell you that the forces of the Islamic Republic killed my child — anything else is a lie.’”

Anna kept going to protests, though she worried how this was affecting her children. After one she wrote: “When my little boy woke up in the morning, he said, ‘Mum, I dreamt last night that they killed you, and I got killed too. You brought flowers to my grave.’ And I said, ‘Damn these tyrants. What did you do to these people that a six-year-old should dream of killing?’”

The end of the protests left Anna deflated. She too has mostly stopped wearing hijab, though still wears it to work.

“We have been spending days in captivity for so long,” she says. “Like most people in Iran my husband wants to emigrate. He says we have never seen the bright side of life but at least let our children do so. Maybe he is right, for no matter how hard we try, we get nowhere.” ➤

Dr Elaheh, 43: "They shot their eyes"

Few witnessed the cruelty meted out on protesters more starkly than the doctors and nurses who risked their own lives to treat them. Among them was Elaheh, a doctor at a hospital in Shiraz. "They were warning us not to treat protesters but the Hippocratic oath means we should treat anyone, so we carried on," she says. "In the first few weeks we were treating students with minor injuries but regime forces would wait outside the hospital to arrest them when they came out. They would also see which doctors and nurses treated them and go to their homes to arrest them. One of my colleagues was active on social media and they arrested her."

"One day regime forces came in and sprayed tear gas in the cardiac unit, so we had to evacuate all our patients, some in the midst of surgery, and they arrested quite a few nurses and doctors and interns."

She also saw security forces using ambulances from which to shoot protesters. "Another day Basij came to the hospital on motorbikes. Many of my colleagues didn't have hijab, so they started beating them. I had my work hijab but I had a mobile phone, so they thought I was filming them and came after me, so I started running and they started beating me. It was terrifying. I know why they hit where they do — they strike the most sensitive areas on your hips near



the kidney and lower abdomen so you get severe internal bleeding and can die. So I knew where to [protect myself]."

She eventually managed to get away. Others were not so lucky. One female doctor was found in a river, her eye missing.

One of the most gruesome methods used by security forces to deter — and identify — protesters was the use of shotguns to spray birdshot into their faces and eyes. Medics were instructed not to remove the pellets until the patients signed a confession. The collaborative news website IranWire, which is investigating atrocities, has documented 700 cases of people shot in the eye or blinded, including a number of children. Among them is Benita Falavarjani, who was playing on her parents' balcony in Isfahan in November when security forces began spraying the area with pellets because residents had been shouting anti-regime slogans. The five-year-old was hit by about 20 pellets and has already lost

ONE WOMAN, WHOSE SCARF HAD SLIPPED ONTO HER SHOULDERS WHILE DRIVING, WAS SENTENCED TO WASHING BODIES IN A MORTUARY FOR A MONTH

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the sight in one eye; she was recently taken to Italy for surgeons to try to save the other.

Underground networks of doctors were set up to treat protesters secretly. Elaheh's husband was part of a group in Shiraz, set up by a well-known eye surgeon. "Everyone is taking a risk because we just want a normal life," she says.

The next wave

While the fact that last year's protests had no leader or organisation made it hard for the regime to stop them, it also made it hard for the women to take it further. They have set up a network of small revolutionary cells to organise and have switched from using Telegram and Instagram to communicate to gaming platforms such as PlayStation 4.

"Streets are now quiet but underground grassroot networks are building," says Omid Shams, an exiled Iranian writer and human rights lawyer who works as project manager for the NGO Justice for Iran. "There can't be a central leadership with a nervous system you could just take out. Instead [you need] a decentralised network so if they find one cell it doesn't lead to others and you can cut the roots but it won't die."

Meanwhile the regime is trying to divide society, erecting billboards urging men to tell their wives and daughters to "behave" and referring to their defiance as "sexual depravity", a "virus" to be eliminated or



The Iranian actress Azadeh Samadi was sentenced to psychological classes after wearing a hat at a funeral. Left: Benita, five, was shot in the eye with a pellet gun

"mental disorders" such as "histrionic disorder" in need of "treatment".

They continue to make examples of people by imposing unorthodox punishments. One woman in the town of Varamin, whose scarf had slipped onto her shoulders while driving, was sentenced to washing dead bodies in a mortuary for a month. A well-known

actress, Azadeh Samadi, who attended a funeral wearing a hat instead of a headscarf, was sentenced to attend psychological classes to "cure her social illness".

"It's very tense," Leyla says. "They pick up women for entering banks or the metro."

The Iranian regime has a history of holding out against the odds. Efforts are under way to boost the economy and break out of international isolation by restoring ties with its longtime rival Saudi Arabia and restarting talks with the West over its nuclear programme — even as it provides Russia with Shahed suicide drones for its nightly attacks on Ukraine. This month Tehran agreed a prisoner swap with the US, receiving \$6 billion in unfrozen assets.

Something feels different, though. Some Tehran coffee bars offer free cappuccinos for women who come without hijabs. People are fundraising to help businesses fined for workers not wearing hijab. Men wear shorts in solidarity. Anti-regime graffiti regularly appears. Even clerics sang protest songs instead of old religious verses at the recent Ashura festival, the most important religious event in Shia-dominated Iran. And every evening Leyla, Anna, Sharzad and their sisters scream "Women, life, freedom!" from their rooftops and balconies into the night sky, hoping that someone out there is listening ■ *Some names have been changed*



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Rainbows on Garry Beach,
Isle of Lewis, Outer Hebrides

The area between
double rainbows is
called Alexander's
band and always
appears darker

Weak red
colour shows
that raindrops
are small

HEAVENS ABOVE!



Sunlight is reflected twice in each raindrop to form a secondary rainbow, where colours are weaker and reversed

A rainbow means the weather where you are standing is likely to change suddenly

The antisolar point — the centre of a rainbow's circle — can be used to tell time and navigate

WEEK 6 In the last of our summer series on how to read nature's signs, *Tristan Gooley* sets his eyes on the skies

We see the sky every day. Or do we? Familiarity breeds not contempt, but disinterest. Modern lifestyles relegate the sky until it sulks quietly in the background, which I think is a terrible waste.

We'd do much better to view the sky as a dome full of characters that are keen to reveal things. Look carefully and the sun, moon and stars will tell you the time, offer directions, forecast the weather and test your senses, free of charge. There is more fascinating information to

be deduced from a single rainbow than you'll find on most phone apps.

John Keats accused Isaac Newton of killing the poetry of a rainbow by "reducing it to a prism". The opposite is true: we find beauty when we look properly and we only do that when we have reason to stop and stare. Knowing the signs to look for gives us cause to pause, then we see things that others miss.

There's a deal to be done. If we offer the sky a moment of our curiosity then it will happily give us clues and signs in return — it is rich with patterns that hide in plain sight.



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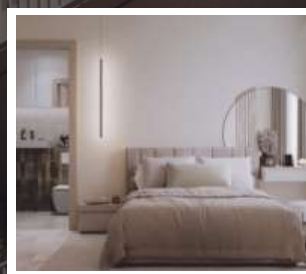
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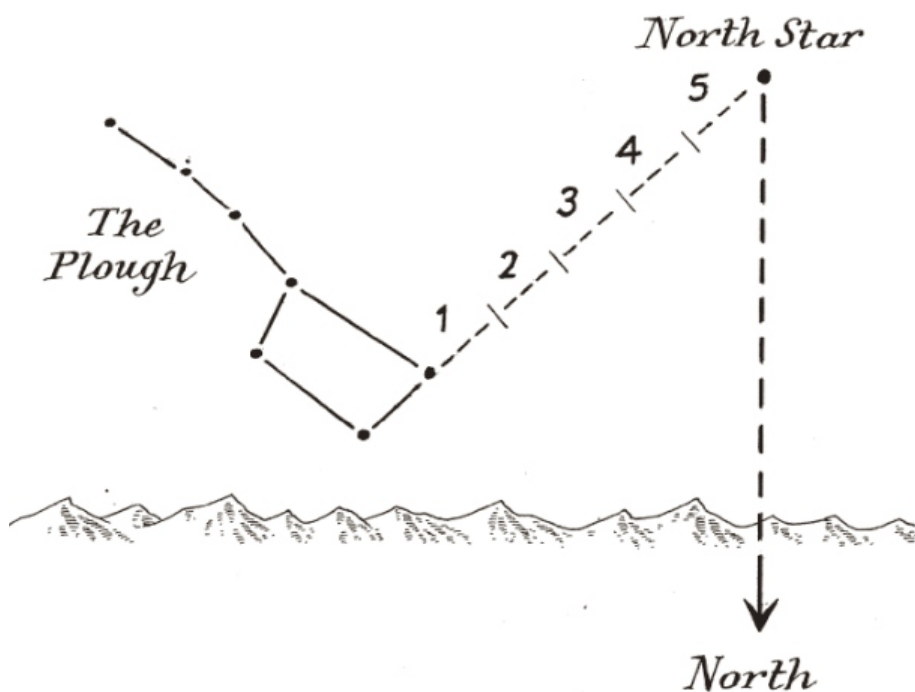
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FINDING NORTH

The easiest method for locating the North Star is by finding the Plough, an easy-to-identify group of seven stars known as the Big Dipper to Americans and the Saucepan to many others. Next you find the “pointer” stars on the saucepan — these are the two stars that a liquid would run off if you tipped up the pan by its handle. The North Star will always be five times the distance between these two pointers in the direction that they point (up away from the pan). True north lies directly under this star.

AIR IS A MIRROR

At the start of any day with clear skies, we expect the sky to be burning bright in the east as the sun rises. And the same will be true in the west at the end of the day. But the next time you are somewhere with good views and weather, look in the opposite direction to sunrise or sunset and you’ll notice that the sky is bright there too. The air acts as a weak mirror and reflects some of the sun’s light back to us when we have our backs to sunrise or sunset.



IS IT A FULL MOON?

Seeing a round moon tells us that we are very close to a full moon, but how can we tell if it is actually full or not? Two facts help us to make a judgment. Full moons are extraordinarily bright because they are opposite the sun, much brighter than the round moons we see a day either side. Also, because they are directly opposite the sun, full moons rise near the time the sun sets. So, if we see a perfectly round, very bright moon that rises close to the time of sunset, it is very likely to be a full moon.



DISTANCE AND COLOURS

As light travels through the atmosphere, it gets scattered. The further it travels, the more it scatters — this changes the colours we see. All colours in a landscape fade towards white as their distance increases. If you see a range of hills, the closest one has the deepest, richest colours and the furthest is closest to white, as in this view of Llyn Gwynant, Snowdonia (above). This is also why the horizon isn’t blue, it’s closer to white, even on a day with no clouds.

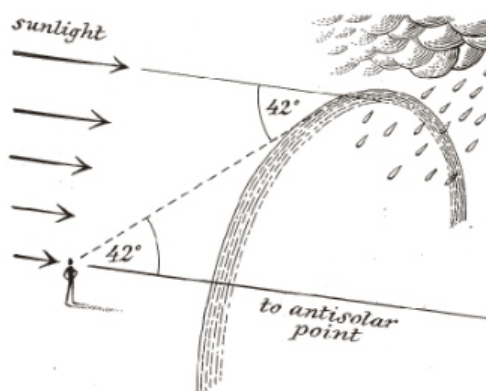
RAINBOW WIZARDRY

To see a rainbow in nature we need a few pieces to come together. First we need some rain; second we need some sunlight to shine on that rain; and third we need an observer between the two, with their back to the sun.

Rainbows always form opposite the sun. They get smaller as the sun rises and bigger as it sets. They always form part of a circle, of which the centre — the antisolar point — is opposite the sun. This means we can use them to navigate, tell the time and forecast the weather.

A rainbow early in the day means that you are looking west and it’s probably about to start raining where you are — because our weather normally comes from the west. If you see a large rainbow in the east, however, it means the sun will soon set and the weather is probably about to improve.

The colours in rainbows can tell us about the type of rain. A strong red colour means big raindrops, while no red means drizzle: “Lots of red means a wet head.”





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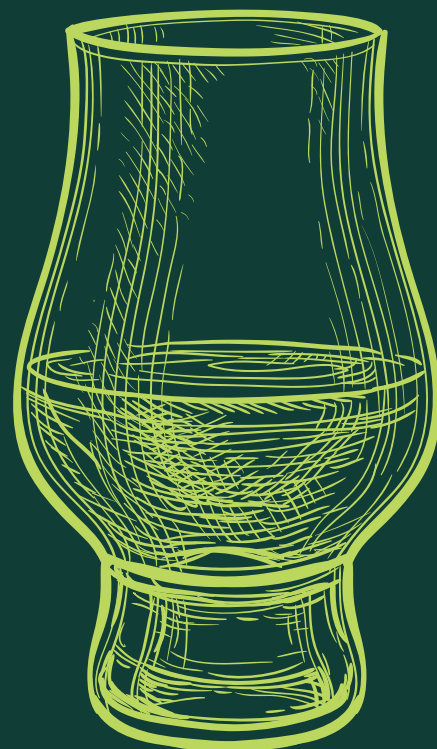
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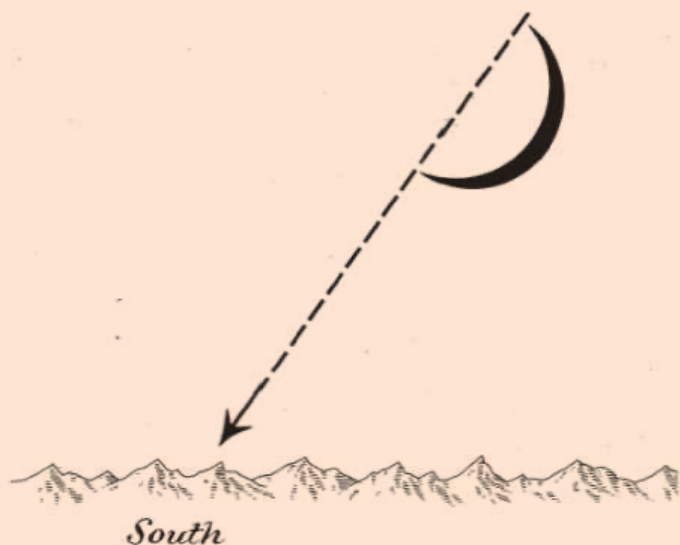
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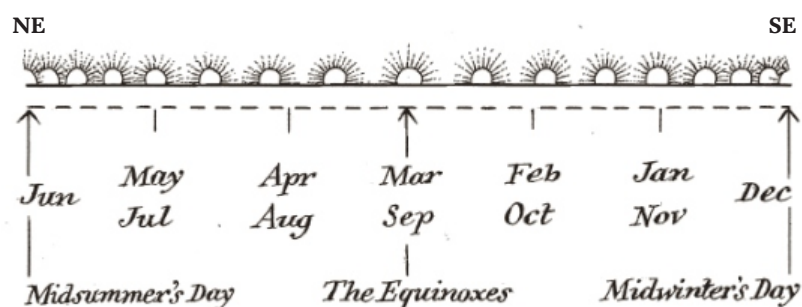




MOON COMPASSES

Imagine a line extending from the horns of a crescent moon down to the horizon and this will give you a rough indication of south. It works best when the moon is high in the sky and grows less accurate when it's near the horizon.

A full moon is opposite the sun — that's why it appears full. It rises in the east at the end of the day and sets in the west at the start of the day. It is due south in the middle of the night.



SUNRISE CALENDAR AND COMPASS

The sun rises in the eastern sky and sets in the western sky, but its exact direction depends on the time of year.

Imagine getting up for sunrise 365 days in a row and taking a photo from a window as the sun's disc peeped halfway over your horizon. If you developed these pictures onto paper and then flicked through them, you would see the sun moving forwards and backwards along the eastern horizon. The next thing you would notice is that its speed changes dramatically.

At either end of this range are the sunrises of June and December. In the UK the sun rises close to northeast in midsummer and close to

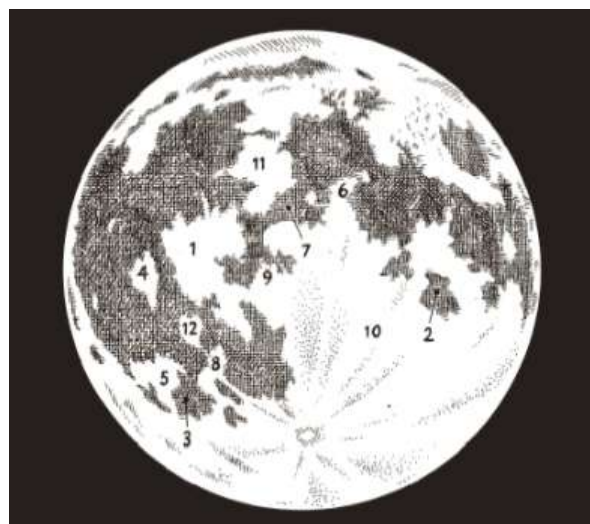
southeast in midwinter. At these times the sun's position changes very little from day to day. It appears to stop altogether at the very edges, at the times we call the summer and winter solstices. The word solstice comes from the Latin meaning "sun standing still". In March and September the sun races through east, rising due east on only two days, the spring and autumn equinoxes.

If, after you dutifully took your photograph each day for a year, you drew a line that pointed to sunrise on the windowsill and wrote the date next to it, you'd see that the direction of sunrise and the date are two sides of the same thing. If you know one, you can quickly deduce the other.

LUNAR EYESIGHT TEST

The American astronomer WH Pickering once listed 12 lunar features in order of difficulty of seeing them with the naked eye. No 1 is easy and No 12 is deemed impossible with the naked eye, so No 11 is the highest goal. It is best to try this in the twilight of dawn or dusk. The daytime sky is too bright and the night-time sky too dark for ideal contrast and viewing conditions.

1. The bright surroundings of Copernicus
2. Mare Nectaris
3. Mare Humorum
4. The bright surroundings of Kepler
5. The region of Gassendi
6. The region of Plinius
7. Mare Vaporum
8. Lubiniezky region
9. Sinus Medii
10. Faint shading near Sacrobosco
11. The dark spot at the foot of Mons Huygens
12. Montes Rhipaeus




THE SEVEN SUNS OF HEVELIUS

From 11am until after noon on February 20, 1661, Johannes Hevelius, a Polish astronomer, saw something extraordinary in the skies above him. A "sevenfold sun miracle or seven sundogs" was how he described it.

Hevelius had seen a collection of arcs and "sundogs", formed when the sun's light passes through ice crystals in the atmosphere — a sign bad weather may be on the way. It is common to see one or two of these, but rare to see them all at the same time. In this picture, taken near Alnwick in Northumberland, you can see a 22-degree halo and sundogs on either side of the sun.



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Four years — and three
prime ministers — since
she left Downing Street,
Theresa May has written a
book and loosened up (a bit).
She tells *Caroline Wheeler*
why she'll never stop biting
back from the back benches

My voice
cracked when
I left No 10.
I was really
annoyed
at myself



PORTRAIT BY
DAN KENNEDY

Since then the politician formerly known as the Maybot — for her sometimes robotic answers to questions — seems to be living something closer to her best life, making careful interventions from the back benches on the Sue Gray report into the lockdown-breaking parties held across

A black and white photograph of three people sitting on a couch. On the left is a woman with curly hair, wearing a dark, long-sleeved dress. In the middle is a young girl with long, wavy hair and bangs, wearing a dark, button-down dress. On the right is a man with short, light-colored hair, wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt. They are all looking towards the camera. The background is a patterned curtain.



28 • The Sunday Times Magazine

putting themselves first — way ahead of the people they are there to serve.

With a title like that you might expect it to be payback time on Johnson, but the index points to just 13 fleeting references to her fellow former prime minister. Indeed, the closest she gets to score-settling is an attack on John Bercow, the former Speaker (and Remain supporter), whom she accuses of carrying out the biggest abuse of power she witnessed during the Brexit impasse over Northern Ireland: “We got to a point where the DUP were being positive. We were actually at the point of them being willing to say they would support the deal. The normal processes went on in terms of going to the Speaker to talk about the motion, and he wouldn’t let us put the motion down. So that meant we couldn’t have the debate, we couldn’t have the vote, and by the time we did the DUP had changed [their mind]. And so there was a point we could have had a vote to do Brexit on the basis of the deal. He took a decision that meant that didn’t go ahead.”

Bercow certainly added to the pressure on May, amid claims he was working with opposition MPs to thwart Brexit, but with the numbers stacked against her in the Commons, it is likely that even without his intervention she would have struggled to get her Brexit deal through.

Instead, her book focuses on events outside the chamber, including the Hillsborough stadium disaster, on which she commissioned Bishop James Jones to conduct a report in the wake of the verdicts of unlawful killing in the second inquest;

the police cover-up over the murder of the private investigator Daniel Morgan; and the Grenfell fire. The book is dedicated to her parents, whom she says taught her the “meaning of service”. They both died before they could see her become an MP.

When I arrive at her chocolate-box detached house on a leafy lane in the village of Sonning in her Maidenhead constituency, where she has lived for 27 years, May, 66, is in the kitchen discussing recipes with her aide. She has plucked one of hundreds of cookery books from her shelves and is leafing through it. In the centre of the sage-green room, which has large windows overlooking a well-kept garden, is a wooden table where we make ourselves comfortable. Philip, 65, a now-retired investment manager, pops his head round the door. The pair, who met at Oxford and have been married for 43 years, chat for a few moments, finishing each other’s sentences, before he scurries away to find a more private corner of the house.



May was born in Eastbourne, East Sussex, in 1956, the only child of Zaidée and Hubert Brasier, who was a Church of England vicar and the chaplain of a hospital. After studying at Holton Park Grammar School, which became the Wheatley Park comprehensive while she was there, May went on to study geography at St Hugh’s College, Oxford. She then worked at the Bank of England and the Association for Payment Clearing Services.

After two unsuccessful attempts to enter parliament, at 40 May became the Conservative MP for Maidenhead in 1997 as Tony Blair’s Labour Party swept to power. She spent much of the next 13 years on the shadow front bench. In 2010, when the coalition government won power, Cameron appointed her as his home secretary — only the second woman to hold that great office of state. She became the longest-serving home secretary in more than a century.

“They always say you had to be a communist in your youth, a socialist in your young adulthood and a Conservative as you got older,” she says. “I’ve always been a Conservative.” Her upbringing taught her the “importance of the freedom of individuals”. “It was the sense that, actually, how far you’re going in life is down to you. It’s about your talents and your willingness to work hard. To me the Conservative Party always provided the better environment in which people could succeed.” Her mother wanted her to be a nun. Did she ever entertain the idea? “No, absolutely not!”

Aside from Geoffrey Boycott, her cricketing hero, May’s father was her

“People want to pigeon-hole women politicians — it’s either ‘You’re so soft’ or ‘You’re a harridan’”



An interaction with John Bercow, whom May criticises for ruling out a vote on her Brexit deal. Above: an unusual show of emotion as she announces her resignation in 2019

biggest inspiration. “His absolute conviction was that he was there for everybody who lived in his parish; I’m there for everybody who lives in my constituency. To him it was regardless of whether they were coming to his church or not. For me it’s regardless of how somebody has voted. Once you’re in that position you’re there to support and help them, to work for them.”

Growing up as the daughter of a vicar, she says, isn’t so different from being the child of a politician. “There was a combination there of public service and public speaking. In the vicarage there was very much a sense that we were there for other people.”

With such responsibility on young shoulders, did she ever feel the need to ➤

rebel? May famously claimed the naughtiest thing she had ever done was run through a field of wheat. “I haven’t had a rebellious childhood and suddenly transformed,” she says. She has also admitted that her guilty pleasure is eating peanut butter straight from the jar. “There’s no transformation on peanut butter — there’s a jar in the cupboard!”

In 1981, a year after her marriage to Philip, her father was driving to a nearby church to conduct the Sunday evening service when he was in a collision with a Range Rover on the A40. He died of head and spine injuries. A few months later May’s mother, who suffered from multiple sclerosis, also died. At the age of 25 May was an orphan. “I suppose it made me even more want to do something that they would have been proud of. Even though they wouldn’t see it.”

However much May might want her legacy to be the legislation she introduced for net zero emissions by 2050, or the Modern Slavery Act — which created new duties and powers to protect victims and prosecute offenders — she knows her premiership will always be seen through the prism of Brexit. She voted to remain in the EU and now believes her life in Downing Street would have been easier if she had been a Brexiteer.

“I don’t think it would have been easier on the negotiation side, but I do think — when



Struggling with a cough and P45-wielding prankster at the Conservative Party conference in 2017. Below: May struts her stuff to Abba on stage the following year

I look back on it — that there were some of my colleagues who were Brexiteers who found it difficult to think that a Remainer would actually deliver Brexit,” she says.

Although she claims she is not trying to blame others for her mistakes, May believes her failure to get her Brexit deal through parliament was due in large part to people putting their personal interests above those of the country. “I started off with the view that we had to find a way of doing Brexit that recognised the concerns of the 48 per cent who voted Remain,” she says. “It became this atmosphere of both Brexiteers and Remainers trying to get what was their absolute aim, rather than a compromise that would better suit everybody.”

There were also serious global events for May to grapple with. She was the first world leader to meet President Trump when she travelled to Washington in January 2017, days after his inauguration. The visit took a bizarre twist when photographs emerged of Trump holding her hand as they walked through the White House.

“I have no idea why he did it. I mean, he sort of said, ‘Oh, there’s a slope so you need to be careful on the slope.’ Now whether this is because Melania always wears very high heels or not, I don’t know. I had heeled shoes on but they weren’t high heels. I thought, ‘I’m capable of walking down a slope, thank you very much,’ and the next thing I know he’s holding my hand.” She adds, laughing: “The best interpretation is he’s being a gentleman. But subsequently a lot of people said maybe *he* needed the support going down the slope. I don’t know. He just grabbed my hand and I thought he would then let go of it, but he didn’t.”

May’s tone becomes more serious when discussing the abuses of power Trump would go on to commit. She describes the storming of the Capitol building in January 2021 as “a wake-up call for us all”. “If you look over the years since the Second World War, there was a sense that liberal democracy was going to be sweeping the world, almost, and it was there and it was embedded and we could take it for granted. I think what happened at Capitol Hill showed that we can’t take it for granted.”

In 2018 she expelled 23 Russian diplomats after an attempt by Vladimir Putin’s regime to assassinate a former spy, Sergei Skripal, on British soil — in Salisbury — with the nerve agent novichok. She says this was the “right message” to send Putin. “In terms of the invasion of Ukraine, we have to look back to Crimea, and even before that to Georgia in 2008. I think arguably the West’s response did suggest to him that the West wasn’t willing to stand up for its values. The West turned its attention to China. So Putin, I think, felt that the West was more divided, wasn’t as coherent in terms of its support for its own western values. I think that all built up into an opportunity for him and he took it.”



Since the invasion, she says, “what’s happened is that the West did come together, the West did show its willingness to support its values, and rather than the division of Nato he’s seeing the expansion of Nato. He’s seeing the West made more coherent and he’s seeing the numbers of troops that Nato are willing to put on his border increase. So he has actually achieved the opposite of what he wanted.”

May’s premiership could have taken a different course had she achieved the landslide victory she had been on track to deliver after calling a snap election in April 2017. For much of the campaign she enjoyed a double-digit poll lead over Labour. But her manifesto pledge on social care, nicknamed the dementia tax, was widely blamed for extinguishing her lead.

May claims the decision to call the election was down to timing, as she was concerned that leaving it any later would have seen an election follow hard on the heels of the UK leaving the EU. “I was obviously extremely disappointed with the results. Surprised, because we’d thought that we would be able to get Labour Leave voters to switch, in order to get Brexit done.

“What happened in the 2019 general election [when Johnson’s Conservatives won 365 seats to Labour’s 202] was what we had expected to happen in the 2017 general election,” May reflects. “What we hadn’t realised is [the Labour leader Jeremy] Corbyn hadn’t shown quite sufficient negativity to Brexit that the Labour Leave voters decided to switch [to the Tories], which they did of course by 2019.”

Did she consider resigning in 2017?

“I felt I’d started something and I wanted to finish it. I said, ‘Look, I got us into this, I’m going to work to get us out.’”

May gently chides me for asking if she cried as she saw her majority evaporate, pointing out this is not a question that would ever be asked of a man. “I think often with women politicians, people want to pigeon-hole them. It’s either ‘You’re so soft that you shouldn’t be doing the job’, or ‘You’re a real hard harridan’, like they did with Thatcher. I didn’t feel discriminated against in the sense that most people would describe as discrimination. As with the Maybot thing, there is a different approach taken to women politicians.”

Disappointingly May today is wearing an uncontroversial turquoise cotton dress, not the £995 chocolate-coloured Amanda Wakeley leather trousers she wore the last time she was interviewed for *The Sunday Times Magazine* in 2016. “All those comments about ‘How does she spend so much on leather trousers?’ — they were lent to me for the shoot! It only goes to show how sometimes women are judged in different ways from men.”

She is used to the slings and arrows. At a crucial Tory party conference in Manchester in October 2017 she had

“I have no idea why Trump held my hand. I’m capable of walking down a slope, thank you very much”

a coughing fit as letters from the slogan behind her (“Building a country that works for everyone”) fell slowly from the wall, and was interrupted by a prankster waving a P45. A year on, in Birmingham, not long after the quality of her dance moves on an official trip to Kenya had been criticised, she hit back by strutting onto the stage to *Dancing Queen*.

One image that will for ever be associated with May’s premiership is the Grenfell tower block in west London engulfed in flames. At 12.54am on June 14, 2017, the fire brigade was called to the blaze in Kensington. Within half an hour the flames of the burning tower lit up the night sky. Seventy-two people died. May was still exhausted in the aftermath of the election six days before. “I remember the next morning standing with private secretaries in the outer office just looking at the television screen,” she says. “The building was still burning. You almost couldn’t comprehend that this had actually happened.”

She was criticised for failing to meet victims during her first visit to the site, but returned to Grenfell to meet them privately in the days and months afterwards. “I think ➤



From top: Donald Trump grips May's hand at the White House soon after his inauguration in 2017; emergency services respond to the poisoning of the former spy Sergei Skripal in Salisbury in 2018

it's so important because often what happens is you get an event like that, a tragedy like that, and politicians turn up on day one, in my case day two, and when the photos are taken and so forth, they go away and nothing more is heard from them."

Grenfell touched a nerve with May because, she says, it appeared to be the physical manifestation of many of the "burning injustices" she had vowed to correct during her first speech as prime minister. The abuse of power here was the "belittling of a group of people because they happened to live in homes owned in part by the state. Those people living there felt they'd been beating their head against the brick wall of authority for many years in regards safety of the building."

May had pledged to make Britain a country that "works not for a privileged few, but for every one of us". This included plans to tackle the lack of affordable housing, fixing broken markets to help with the cost of living and stamping out racial and class disparities. "I think there were important things that I was able to do that addressed some of the specific social injustices. Setting up the Race Disparity Unit [which collects, analyses and publishes government data on the experiences of people from different ethnic backgrounds], for example, and recognising that a significant part of our population have often



had a very different experience of living in the UK from the rest of us."

As part of my trip to Maidenhead I join May on a visit to Thames Hospice. She is a frequent visitor to the bright, airy building overlooking a sailing lake, and was there when the Queen opened it in July last year — one of her last public events before she died in September.

It is impossible to miss the broad smile breaking across the face of Aaron Sennick, a 20-year-old with complex medical

conditions, when he sees May. At one point he gushes: "Thank you for everything you have done for this country." May looks more comfortable sitting beside Aaron's bedside than she ever did at the dispatch box.

Aaron regales her with stories of his voluntary work and his burgeoning social media career. In return May tells him she is a technophobe and has only in the past few months given up her beloved BlackBerry and switched to an iPhone. He asks about her favourite memory as prime minister. May reveals it was in 2018 when she met the British diving team who had rescued a young football team from a cave in Thailand. She tells Aaron that she often found the most special moments were when ordinary people were recognised and celebrated for doing extraordinary things.

She is planning to fight the next election but is happy away from the front benches. "I don't think it's a good idea for prime ministers to go back," she says. "I had 13 years in opposition — 12 of those on the front bench and then nine years on the front bench in government. So actually it has been rather nice to go back to the back benches and to do the job of being a constituency MP."

After she left Downing Street, her husband, Philip, was awarded a knighthood in recognition of his political service. He was nominated by Johnson. Although his

For May, Grenfell was a manifestation of the "burning injustices" she had vowed to correct



From left: the fire at Grenfell Tower claimed 72 lives, including those of 18 children; Dame! Carayol, an artist who lost family members in the tragedy, presents May with a print of his work Grenfell Tower: Eyesore!! Final Straw

title means that his wife is now Lady May, she does not use it. May remains tight-lipped on whether this is because she is waiting for a peerage of her own.

“I think there is a need for PMs to think very carefully about the numbers that they’re putting into the Lords,” she says — the closest she gets to possible criticism of Johnson, who created 87 new peers during his tenure as prime minister (and awarded 7 more in his resignation honours), compared with May’s 43. “I actively tried to ensure that I restricted my list throughout my time as PM,” she says. Liz Truss’s list, after her 49-day premiership, is imminent.

Despite Truss crashing the economy, does May think Rishi Sunak can deliver on his promises and win the next election? “What people want to see is a prime minister — which they are seeing in Rishi — who has understood issues that matter to them and is putting in place what he believes will deliver on those issues,” she says. “We all know in politics that other things happen that can knock you off course, but I think what people want to see is that you are actively doing your best to deliver.”

May says she is “very pleased” that Sunak has not yet swayed from the 2050 net zero target she introduced, insisting that net zero is “the most important economic opportunity of the 21st century”. She adds: “Lots of people talk about the costs but



Above left: May was lent a pair of leather trousers for a Sunday Times Magazine photoshoot in 2016. Above right: May’s husband, Philip, receives his knighthood in 2021

don’t talk about what would net off those costs in terms of positives for the economy, for jobs, for people and so forth. There is a road in Maidenhead that is social housing that recycles rainwater — it has ferns on the roof to capture the rainwater better and so forth. It has all sorts of energy-efficient elements and the people who live there have seen their energy bills go down significantly. So I always say that what’s good for the planet can be good for your pocket.”

She says the argument will not be made by “lecturing people”. “We won’t achieve net zero if all we do is tell people you can’t fly, you can’t drive, you can’t eat meat. Actually, what we’ve got to do is say, you can play your role, your part in a number of different ways on a day-to-day basis. Government must play its part and business must play its part as well.” She adds: “If you look at everything that’s

coming out of the Climate Change Committee and so forth, we really do have to address this issue. You can’t get to 2048 and say, Ooh right, we’ve got a target in two years’ time, let’s do this... because that would be even costlier.”

May is less supportive of Sunak’s plans to remove the protections for victims of slavery who enter Britain illegally, and she defied a three-line whip after a debate on the issue in July. “My key concern is around modern slavery,” she says. “Because if we’re going to stop it we need to break the business model. That means catching perpetrators. To catch perpetrators you need victims to be willing to come forward, identify themselves and give evidence and I worry that what’s now in the Illegal Migration Act, and indeed the Nationality and Borders Act, together will lead to a situation where fewer victims will come forward.” She is preparing to launch a global commission on modern slavery, made up of CEOs, former world leaders, academics and civil society leaders. “There’s a sort of unfortunate thing in politics that politicians will often focus on one big thing at one point and then something else happens and the energy goes out of the first thing,” she says.

However, May will combine her new role with being a backbench MP. Even as prime minister she would go knocking on doors as often as she could in her constituency. Why? “You should never forget that even if you get to the very top job you’re only there because you have been elected as an MP.”

In her book, in one of the few passages to mention Johnson by name, she writes:

“Another source of anger was the perception that somehow MPs were able to get away with breaking the sort of rules which they would expect everyone else to follow. This was to have another manifestation under Boris Johnson’s premiership, when those in 10 Downing Street and elsewhere in Whitehall were found to have broken Covid pandemic lockdown rules. The idea that there has been one rule for the public and another for MPs provokes public cynicism and leads increasingly to the charge of hypocrisy. In other words, why should we do what you say when you don’t do it yourself? Above all, it shatters any sense that MPs are leaders in society. Yet I still believe we have a responsibility to try to show such leadership. It may be harder in today’s world, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t try.”

May believes that in order to restore integrity to politics, there needs to be an understanding that being a politician is a position of public service rather than power. “What you fundamentally need is for MPs not to think that they’re a species apart simply because they’ve been elected,” she says. “It’s that sense that, for some MPs, they are in a position of power because they’ve been elected, that they’re special, that they are a breed set apart. I think we have to change that thinking because, basically, being an MP is a job.” ■

The Abuse of Power by Theresa May (Headline £25). Read an exclusive extract in The Times tomorrow. To order a copy go to timesbookshop.co.uk or call 020 3176 2935. Free UK standard P&P on orders over £25

Theresa May will be in conversation with Richard Coles at Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank Centre, London SE1, on September 14. There is a limited allocation of tickets for Times+ members. To enter the ballot for a chance to attend in person, visit mytimesplus.co.uk/events

Wise young things



Our Counting Change survey shows that, in this digital age, kids take charge of their own spending surprisingly early

If you still think of little children cracking open a piggy bank to toddle down to the sweet shop, coins in hand, you're in for a shock: 6 per cent of British children aged 3-4 have already started to spend money online.

That's just one of the surprising statistics uncovered in an exclusive YouGov survey of more than a thousand parents – commissioned by The Times in partnership with Lloyds Bank – looking into how our children are growing up in a new world of digital money.

That figure rises to 20 per cent among 5 to 8-year-olds. By the time they are 12-15, more children

spend money online (62 per cent) than don't. And it's not just the odd purchase here and there: more than a quarter of all kids who use social media to buy things are said to do so daily; for the 16-18 age group it's 40 per cent.

Andy Bickers, savings director at Lloyds Bank, says: "As more young people opt for spending online rather than in tangible cash and pennies, it's valuable to introduce them to the concept of doing so safely, and to ensure that your conversations match up with the real way in which money gets used and spent as they get older. One key entry point to be aware of is games:

according to Lloyds Banking Group's survey of 1,000 children in 2021, 40 per cent of 8 to 15-year-olds now spend pocket money on online gaming."

And with this fascination comes pester power. The survey found that 38 per cent of parents with children who spend online report feeling under pressure to buy add-ons and virtual merchandise for online games (for example, new characters and costumes for avatars) that kids can't afford themselves. This figure peaks in the 9-11 age group (64 per cent) – diminishing, presumably, as older children start to be able to afford such items for themselves.

THE TIMES
money mentor
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LLOYDS BANK

For more information about the Smart Start account for children, search Smart Start from Lloyds Bank



Age of independence

So when do children start to control their financial destiny? Overall, only 36 per cent in our survey have enough independence to buy the things they want without input from parents. But the older the child, the more likely they are to have agency over how and where they spend their money.

According to their parents, 5 per cent of 3 to 4-year-olds are in charge of their own spending. By age 5-8, that goes up to 15 per cent. It's when children reach secondary school – when they can have their own bank account – that parents report a marked increase: 40 per cent of 12 to 15-year-olds can buy items without asking Mum or Dad. By the age of 16, two thirds of children are in charge of their own money.

Learning the ropes: children can develop money management skills at a young age

*Parents/guardians need to have an existing Club Lloyds Current Account and be registered for Internet Banking.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 4,512 UK adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between June 29-30, 2023. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

Surprisingly, perhaps, it appears that young Londoners enjoy less financial independence than in the rest of the UK.

Much of this financial independence comes from having a debit card. They start young too: 13 per cent of 5 to 8-year-olds have one, presumably in the form of a prepaid card; rising to 29 per cent for 9-11s. It's in the 12-15 age group that debit card ownership really takes off (61 per cent). And by the age of 16, when many children are starting A-level courses, 85 per cent have their own card.

“Being able to see their money in real time can help children learn about financial management,” says Bickers. “The Smart Start* account from Lloyds Bank lets children aged 11-15 begin budgeting and managing finances themselves by being split into two parts: one for spending, and one for saving. The spending account works just like a current account, with a contactless Visa debit card to use in shops, online and at cash machines. The savings account gives instant access savings, helping kids to get into the habit of saving towards long-term goals and items they want.”

Someone to watch over them

While their children may be growing in confidence, most parents still like to monitor their spending. Well over half (57 per cent) say they are aware of everything their children spend money on.

Mums and dads are especially diligent when their children are still in primary school, with almost three quarters taking a close interest in spending. By age 12, a year into secondary education, parents become more relaxed, with only half checking up regularly. By age 16, most are happy to cut the financial apron strings, with less than a third of parents aware in detail of how their children spend their money.

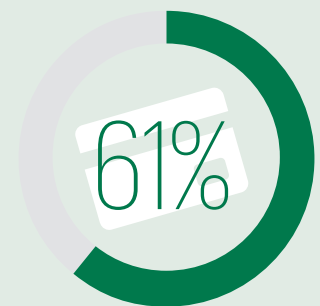
“We know parents whose kids are ready for more financial independence don't want to feel like they're taking the stabilisers off too soon,” says Bickers.

“Smart Start gives parents the oversight to help them if needed.”

SPONSORED CONTENT

Spotlight on secondary schools

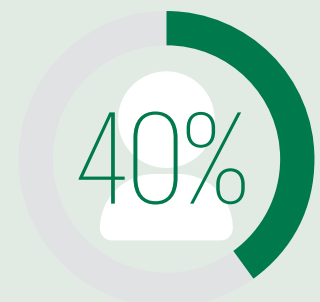
Our survey shows that kids aged 12-15 really grow in financial independence



have their own debit card, and 62 per cent spend online



of those children use social media to buy things daily



have acquired some financial independence from their parents



Scan for more helpful information from Lloyds Bank

Art of war



Lee Miller went from Vogue model to pioneering Second World War photographer. Now a film about her life is set to premiere starring Kate Winslet

Above: the body of an SS guard floats in a canal at the liberated Dachau concentration camp, 1945

Right: Miller in Normandy wearing a US army helmet for photographers. By an unknown photographer, 1944





One of Miller's first fashion shoots for British Vogue in London at the outbreak of war in 1939



Elizabeth “Lee” Miller cut an unusual figure photographing the battlefields and ravaged cities of Europe in the final year of the Second World War. One of few women in her field,

Miller — who is portrayed by Kate Winslet in *Lee*, an upcoming biopic — documented the Allied liberation of Nazi concentration camps. After visiting Dachau, she wiped the mud off her boots on Hitler’s bathmat and posed in the tub at his abandoned apartment in Munich.

Born in Poughkeepsie, New York, in 1907, Miller had started out as a model after a chance meeting with the publishing tycoon Condé Nast, who put her on the March 1927 cover of *Vogue*. In 1929 she moved to Paris to study photography under Man Ray and joined the French surrealist scene. Living in London when war broke out, she started shooting fashion stories for British *Vogue*, then became its war correspondent in 1944. Her harrowing images of dead soldiers, burns victims and bodies piled up at Buchenwald concentration camp made her one of the most important photographers of the 20th century. Miller died of cancer, aged 70, in 1977 ■

Lee Miller: Photographs, by Antony Penrose (Thames & Hudson £30). Order a copy from timesbookshop.co.uk or call 020 3176 2935. Free UK standard P&P on online orders over £25. Special discount available for Times+ members



Top: Isabel Tisdall, right, a *Vogue* fashion editor, and another woman wear fire masks in London, 1941

Above: a member of the Home Guard, 1940. Miller’s lover, the surrealist Roland Penrose, gave them camouflage lessons



Left: a piano lies buried under rubble during the Blitz in London, 1940

Below: a boot and ammunition in the debris at the Battle of Saint-Malo, Normandy, 1944

Bottom: searchlight operators of the Auxiliary Territorial Service, north London, 1943





**Children around
Notre Dame celebrate
the liberation of
Paris in 1944**



Above: retreating SS troops torch the Berghof, Adolf Hitler's bolthole in the Bavarian Alps, Germany, 1945

Above right: a Frenchwoman is interrogated for consorting with Germans, Rennes, France, 1944

Right: Miller in the bathtub at Hitler's Munich apartment. By David E Scherman, 1945





D R I V I N G • Jeremy Clarkson

An old off-roader that flouts the Cotswolds dress code



REVIEW PORSCHE CAYENNE

The invitation to a party that I received recently said the dress code was “La Dolce Vita”. And having absolutely no clue whether that meant “black tie” or “a jockstrap and army boots”, I asked the internet. Which said “La Dolce Vita” means “business casual”.

Immediately some sick came into my mouth because while I had no idea what “business casual” was, it did create an image in my mind, and the image was of a conventioneer in Florida.

A polo shirt of some kind tucked into the waistband of a pair of chinos. And all topped off with some boating shoes. This sounded a) revolting and b) not very Dolce Vitaish at all.

I therefore went to the party in a pair of Levi’s jeans and a blue linen jacket. Which is what I also wear when the invite says “lounge suit”, “smart casual” or even “fancy dress”.

Perhaps the most dangerous dress code is “dress to thrill”, because many assume this has something to do with James Bond. It doesn’t. A point that became clear to one guest at a recent “dress to thrill” party when he walked through the door in a full frogman outfit and noticed that everyone else was in black tie. Actually, that’s not strictly true. Another guest who’d made the same mistake turned up in a Baron Samedi outfit, which meant he’d effectively blacked up at a party where many of the guests were

young black men who’d never seen *Live and Let Die*.

I can’t stand dress codes because what does it matter what someone wears? I feel sure the style guru Nicky Haslam would call them common. But, more important, they’re irrelevant. And they’re especially irrelevant at a sporting event.

Why do you have to wear a shiny hat at Ascot? And why are you forced to put on a pair of Rupert Bear trousers on various golf courses? Wimbledon is especially hilarious. Because it’s run by the sort of people who love a dress-code restaurant, they are obviously unwilling to let the spectators turn up in what they want. So they’ve come up with a stipulation, which is: no ripped jeans.

What they mean of course is that they don’t want the sort of people who might wear ripped jeans but they’re miles behind the times. Because the sort of people who wore ripped jeans

when the Beastie Boys were running around helping themselves to VW badges now tend to wear tracksuit bottoms and training shoes. And saying “no tracksuits or training shoes” would be a bit of a problem at a sporting venue like Wimbledon.

What’s interesting to me, however, is that many of those who do prepare themselves properly for dress-code events spend hours shopping and bathing and shaving and doing up ties in a weird way and fastening complicated cufflinks, and using a velvet hairbrush to dust off their shiny lapels and wrestling with shoe trees and delicate socks and press studs and then, when they are looking GQ cover-boy immaculate, they go to the party in a Tesla.

This means that long before I’ve seen their dustless couture, which doesn’t mean anything to me anyway, I’ll have clocked them as an idiot.



Porsche is even written on the mudflaps. Which is odd, because underneath it's a Volkswagen

Which brings me on to a rather strange car that arrived in my yard the other week. It was a 2005 Porsche Cayenne S that had been lightly modified to give it a rally raid look. The tyres were chunky, there was a roof box with a tent in it and at the front there were the sort of spotlights that teenage boys (me) used to fit to their Cortinas because they couldn't afford a pair of proper Cibies.

To round off this pound-shop transformation, someone had decided to write the word "Porsche" on pretty well all the flat surfaces. It was on the roof box, it was writ large down the flanks, it was even on the £7 Halford mudflaps. Which is odd because underneath this particular Porsche was actually a Volkswagen.

Because this was a £3,000 car — yes, really — with about £40 worth of tacky-looking options nailed to it, I assumed someone had come round to mend my plumbing or drop off some hats for the farm shop. But no. It had been sent round by Porsche themselves, as a kind of mobile billboard for a service where you buy an old Cayenne and a Porsche dealer does it up. Before this particular car was placed in their museum — it's an example of the first Porsche to have more than three doors — they wanted me to have a play with it.

This was a problem because where I live everyone has either a dark grey Range Rover or a dark grey Defender. Or if they're really rich, either an Agusta A109 helicopter or a 15-year-old Polo with no gearlever because

the dog ate it. Those are your choices. In this neck of the woods a car with Porsche written on every flat surface and a tent on the roof is the full Baron Samedi. It's the frogman suit at the embassy dinner.

For two days I didn't go out in it at all. I just didn't have the chutzpah. But then I had to feed the pigs, and as they live in a wood I figured no one would see me, so off I went. The dogs liked it because you can drive along with the rear tailgate closed but the back window open, so they could make their ears flap about in the breeze while getting high on the exhaust fumes.

And I liked it too, if I'm honest, because this was from a time when off-road cars were actually built to go off road. There was a no-nonsense to them, a simplicity. And lots of locking diffs, not that you need them up here on Cotswold brash, which is always bone dry three minutes after a downpour. No one gets heavy wellies up here, and no car ever gets stuck.

That night I was meeting up with some friends at a local pub. As parking's always tricky there, I figured I'd end up a long way away and that no one would ever see it, so off I went. And halfway there the engine warning light came on, followed by a strange sense that one or two of the eight cylinders weren't working. So I came home, used the equally old Range Rover instead, and the next time I looked the Cayenne had gone back to where it came from.

So what conclusions can be drawn from this weird week of yesteryear motoring? That if you're going to modify a car, you need to spend more than £7? That the Cayenne is not as reliable as my Range Rover? Or that you shouldn't put stuff in a museum just because it's old? There needs to be more to it than that.

No. What I took away from the whole experience is the amazing revelation that you can buy a Porsche Cayenne for three grand. That seems to be a lot of car for a very small amount of money. And if it's grey and a bit moth-eaten, it's the same as a pair of jeans and a blue linen jacket. The sort of car that works everywhere ■

COLLECTORS' CLASSICS Mercedes 230 SL



The Mercedes 230 SL was as much a symbol of the 1960s as Sophia Loren and almost as stylish. When she drove a lipstick red one with Gregory Peck beside her in the spy thriller *Arabesque* (1966), the world fell in love.

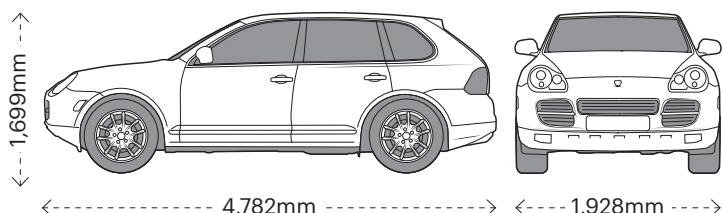
Not that the car needed a sales boost. Unveiled at the Geneva Motor Show in 1963, the sleek-looking SL (for super-light) succeeded the curvier SLs of the Fifties and it caught on straight away. John Lennon bought one in 1965, the year the Beatles released *Drive My Car*, and he received an MBE. When he turned his back on the establishment he returned the MBE but not the little two-seater. Night blue with matching interior, it fetched £176,000 at auction in 2019.

Like only a handful of classics from that era, the SL has been in production ever since. Early models go for as little as £33,000 if you're prepared to take on a project, or fully restored at closer to £100,000.

Or hire one from a wedding fleet if you just fancy a drive. Climb into the leather seat of a cherished original, slide the four-speed manual into gear and the SL is as close to a time machine as you'll find outside of Doc Brown's DeLorean. On a sunny day you can remove the "pagoda" hard top and watch the world flash by like a film on rewind. Drive far enough and you may get back to 1966, when petrol was an inflation-adjusted 86p a litre.

Nick Rufford

The Clarkometer Porsche Cayenne S



Engine 4511cc, V8, petrol **Power** 335bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 310 lb ft @ 2500rpm **Acceleration** 0-62mph: 6.8sec
Top speed 150mph **Fuel / CO₂** Up to 18mpg / 380g/km
Weight 2,245kg **Price** From £3,000 (used) **Release date** 2005

Jeremy's rating ★★★★★☆

FITNESS

The ultimate menopause workout

Exercise and diet can make “the change” less intimidating, writes *Rosie Stockley*

Generations before us suffered through the huge changes in mind, mood and body that come with the menopause with very little support, few role models talking publicly about their symptoms and a lack of compassion from employers and the healthcare system. Thankfully that’s changing — and we can start at any stage of life to future-proof our bodies. There are so many ways that exercise and simple movements can help us.

Strength of mind

Realising the body is changing can be tough psychologically. Exacerbating this is the fluctuation in hormones that comes with the perimenopause — the natural



transition time to menopause, defined as 12 months after your last menstruation. Levels of oestrogen and progesterone, plus other factors, affect the production of serotonin (the hormone that helps with self-esteem and confidence), leading to mood swings. Disturbed sleep is common during menopause, with anxiety and depression symptoms occurring more frequently.

Exercise can be really beneficial: when you work the body through cardio or resistance training, endorphins are produced, contributing to positive mood, energy and confidence. Try to find movement that you enjoy and you’re motivated to stick



to as it will help both mind and body.

Boost your bones

Our bones reach maximum density when we’re about 30 — I know, it sounds terrible to think that we’re on the decline from that young an age, but it helps to be aware so we can actively support the changes in our body. Decreasing bone density is called osteopenia in the earlier stages and can develop into osteoporosis in later life, which can increase the risk of bone breakage. During menopause there is a



dramatic decline in oestrogen levels, which accelerates bone degeneration.

You can counter this through lifestyle choices. First, ensure you’re getting enough calcium in your diet: good options are milk, cheese and other dairy foods, green leafy vegetables such as broccoli and cabbage, soya beans, tofu and plant-based drinks with added calcium — and take a calcium supplement if necessary.

Next, focus on a combination of exercises, including resistance training and weight-bearing workouts where your feet strike the floor, such as walking, running or high-impact circuits. These movements work the skeleton hard. Aim for



variety to avoid plateauing — the body is very clever at making it easy for itself, so we want to keep it guessing.

Resistance training is any movement where you lift or pull against a force — it doesn’t have to be lifting weights in the gym. You could use resistance bands, dumbbells, yoga, Pilates, cycling or rowing — what’s

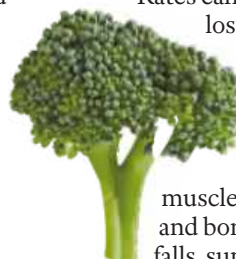


important is the muscles have to work hard to complete the movement.

In turn, the bones respond to this pull. A good way to start would be body-weight exercises like lunges, squats, push-ups with your knees on the ground, and triceps dips. Then introduce elastic resistance bands or weights in whole-body movements such as squats and lunges, plus upper-body strengthening such as bent-over rows. As you gain strength you can add more resistance.

Muscle up

Resistance training is equally important for muscle tone. You gradually begin losing muscle mass and strength sometime during your thirties or forties, with this process speeding up between the ages of 65 and 80. Rates can vary, but you could



lose as much as 8 per cent of your muscle mass each decade, so it’s important to continue to train as you age. Stronger muscles support the joints and bones, reduce the risk of falls, support good posture,

which can reduce back pain, and help us feel strong and able to do more in our daily life. Plus lots of us are aiming for lower body fat with increased visible muscle tone, and that's totally valid too.

During perimenopause, many women report noticing increased body fat around their middle due to the way fat cells build up around the internal organs. Reducing alcohol, eating lots of fibrous, high-protein food (also great for maintaining muscles), reducing sugar intake and getting quality sleep can help manage this symptom.

Don't overdo it

It's important to make sure our exercise choices don't cause our body any issues. Many women experience pelvic floor dysfunction during menopause as these muscles, like all the others, weaken. Keep up with (or start!) your pelvic floor exercises. High-impact, repetitive movements such as running can put a lot of pressure on the pelvis and surrounding muscles, so if you have any adverse symptoms — pain, leaking, aching or a feeling of heaviness in the pelvis area — reduce the impact of your exercise.

A women's health physio will be able to advise you.

Exercise should make us feel good, and although we want to feel we're working hard, if our energy levels are low due to menopause symptoms or just life in general, it's best to avoid very high-intensity exercise, which releases lots of the stress hormone cortisol. Choose lower-impact, lower-intensity types of movement such as yoga, brisk walking or a light weights session.

The more people share their experience and knowledge about ageing, the better information we will have and the more support we can give each other ■

Rosie Stockley is the founder of Mamawell, which helps women through pregnancy, postpartum and beyond through specialised online programmes; mamawell.org



How much water should you really be drinking?



Eight glasses a day — that's how much water most Brits think they should be drinking. And many of us will be worried we're falling short. Collectively, we drank 2.51 billion litres of bottled water in 2021, while almost 60 per cent of us now carry a reusable bottle.

In the warm summer months we're right to think about staying hydrated. Short-term dehydration can lead to headaches, fatigue and dizziness, while over longer periods it can result in kidney problems, constipation and muscle damage. But do we need to be chugging eight glasses a day?

This goal "isn't founded in robust research", says Professor Courtney Kipps, a consultant in sport and exercise medicine at the Institute of Sport, Exercise and Health in London, adding that it possibly stems from a misreading of a US Food and Nutrition Board paper from 1945. Today, Public Health England's Eatwell Guide advises six to eight glasses of fluid per day, which can include "water, lower-fat milk and sugar-free drinks", while the European Food Safety Authority recommends a water intake of 2-2.5 litres, including water derived from food. But blanket guidelines can be "unhelpful" Kipps says: "They don't account for people's different activity levels, body sizes or requirements." According to the NHS, your urine should be a pale yellow colour if you're drinking enough.

Last year a group of scientists published a study of 5,604 people across 23 countries, ranging in age from 8 days to 96 years old. They found their water requirements were "extraordinarily variable" — from about 1.5 litres per day up to about eight litres", says the author of the study, Professor John Speakman of the

University of Aberdeen. "And that depended on a host of factors." High levels of physical activity, breastfeeding or pregnancy, hot and humid environments and high altitudes all led to greater needs.

So how do we know how much we should be drinking? Simple: thirst. "When you're thirsty, that's the body saying give me a little bit more water," Kipps says. You might have heard that you should drink to pre-empt thirst, or that by the time you're thirsty it's "too late" — but these are common misconceptions, he says. Children, older people and those who are ill might not be able to rely on thirst signals alone to guide their fluid intake, but for most healthy people "thirst is the body's exquisite hydration measure".

Drinking a bit more than needed isn't problematic. "It's just a waste," Speakman says. "You just pee more." But excessive consumption can lead to water intoxication, often associated with endurance athletes like marathon runners who drink too much while exercising. "The risk might be minor, but for some people it's life-changing or even fatal."

Another misconception is that your morning cup of coffee doesn't contribute to your needs. While caffeine can have diuretic effects, the loss of fluid won't exceed intake if you're consuming it in moderation. "All fluid is useful," Speakman says. You can also choose foods with high water content. "Fruits, vegetables, legumes and yoghurt can be very hydrating," says Alex Ruani, a researcher in nutrition science education at University College London. In short, "listen to your body", Kipps says. "If it tells you you're thirsty, drink some water, quench your thirst, but you don't need to drink more than that." ■

By Emily Dixon

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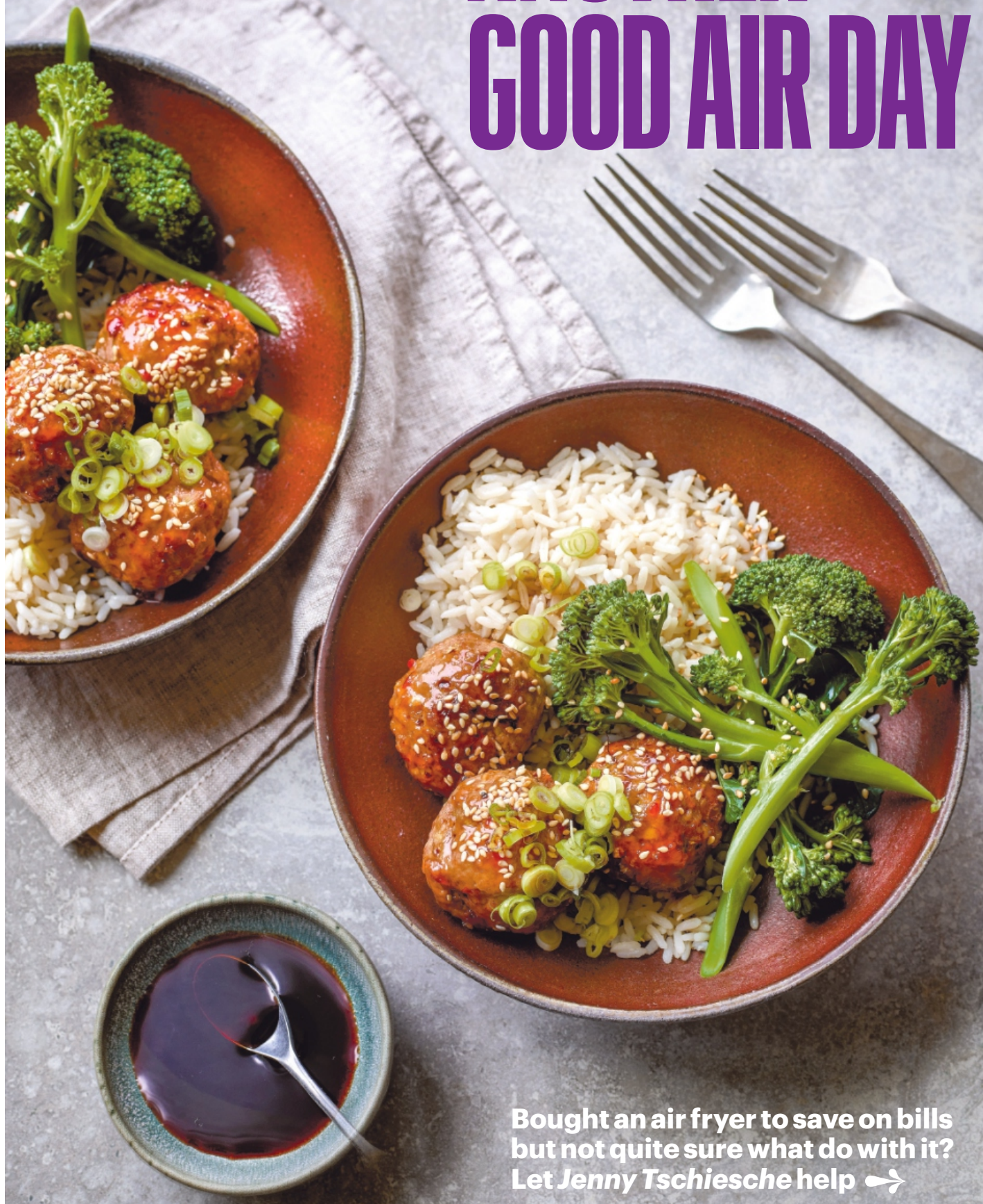
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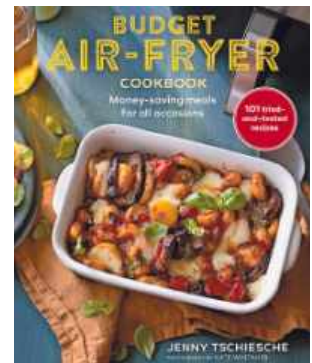


Bought an air fryer to save on bills
but not quite sure what to do with it?
Let *Jenny Tschiesche* help ➔



One big winner to emerge from the cost of living crisis is the air fryer. For many modern cooks, they have become an essential bit of kit — a mini fan oven that can heat up to 200C in a few seconds, cooks food very efficiently and costs a fraction of the price of a full-size oven to run. You can buy one for

as little as £23, or up to £500 for an XXL version. These recipes will guide you through everything you need to know to make the most of your air fryer, from family comfort food to more adventurous meals.



Budget Air-Fryer Cookbook by Jenny Tschiesche (Ryland Peters & Small £16.99). Buy at timesbookshop.co.uk. Special discount for Times+ members

Chinese-style pork meatballs

These delicious meatballs are perfectly seasoned and great served with rice and steamed green vegetables.

Serves 2

Ingredients

- 300g minced pork
- 1 tsp finely chopped garlic
- 1 tsp finely chopped ginger
- 1 tbsp light soy sauce, plus extra, to serve
- 1 tbsp Shaoxing wine or apple cider vinegar
- 3 spring onions, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp breadcrumbs
- 1 tbsp sweet chilli dipping sauce

To serve

- Cooked white rice
- Steamed broccoli
- Toasted sesame seeds (optional)

01 In a large bowl combine the pork, finely chopped garlic and ginger, soy

sauce, Shaoxing wine or apple cider vinegar, one of the finely chopped spring onions (reserve the other two for the garnish) and the breadcrumbs.

02 When everything is thoroughly combined, mould the mixture into six equal-sized meatballs and place them carefully in a heatproof dish that fits in your air fryer.

03 Heat the air fryer to 180C — it shouldn't take more than a few minutes. Place the dish in the air fryer and cook for 10-12 min. Halfway through cooking, brush the outside of each meatball with the sweet chilli sauce.

04 Check that the internal temperature of the meatballs has reached 71C using a food thermometer — if not, cook for a few more minutes and check again.

05 Serve with rice and steamed broccoli, sprinkle over a little more light soy sauce and scatter the remaining spring onions and some toasted sesame seeds (if using) over the top.



Baked goat's cheese pots

Rick Stein is a food hero of mine and was one of my father's favourite chefs too. This recipe is inspired by one from his *Secret France* cookbook, which I was leafing through after my father died and sorting through all the cookery books he had amassed. The recipe shouted out to be adapted for an air fryer. It's also delicious with baked pears.

Serves 4 as a light bite

Ingredients

- 15g butter, for greasing
- 200g goat's cheese log (with rind), cut into 12 slices
- 200g crème fraîche
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 30g chopped walnuts

To serve

- 2 tsp freshly chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 2 apples, thinly sliced
- Crusty bread

01 Grease the inside of four ramekins with the butter, then put three slices of the goat's cheese in the base of each ramekin.



02 In a bowl mix together the crème fraîche and salt and pepper, then spread this equally over the goat's cheese in each ramekin.

03 Scatter the chopped walnuts over the top of the crème fraîche.

04 Heat the air fryer to 160C, then put the ramekins in the air fryer and cook for 12 min.

05 Serve with chopped parsley scattered over, slices of apple and some crusty bread.

Ham, leek and cheese bake

One of the best ways to get value for money at the butcher's counter is to buy a large ham or gammon. It's so versatile, and this recipe shows you how easy it is to use up the leftovers too.



**SAVE FOR
LATER**

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Serves 2

Ingredients

- 2 leeks
- 15g butter
- 1 tsp olive oil
- ¼ tsp salt
- 100g day-old bread, torn into chunks
- 200g leftover ham, cubed
- ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 3 eggs
- 150ml cream
- 200ml milk
- ½ tsp mustard powder (optional)
- 2 tbsp grated grana padano
- 50g grated cheddar

01 Slice each leek lengthways, then into semicircles about 2cm thick. Rinse the leeks and place in a heatproof dish that fits in your air fryer.

02 Add the butter, olive oil and salt to the dish. Heat the air

fryer to 180C, then add the dish and cook for 15 min, stirring twice during cooking.

03 Place the chunks of bread in the base of a heatproof dish that fits in your air fryer. Add the cooked leeks and the ham to the bread, then grind the black pepper over the top.

04 In a large bowl mix together the eggs, cream, milk, mustard powder (if using) and grana padano. Slowly pour this mixture into the dish of bread and leeks, making sure it gets into all the nooks and crannies.

05 Lower the air fryer's temperature to 160C, put the dish in the air fryer and cook for 12-14 min. After about 7 min, sprinkle the grated cheddar over the top and continue to cook. Serve hot or cold ■

IN THE KITCHEN • India Knight

Beans that will have everyone running back for seconds



always grow too many beans, particularly runner because I like their scarlet flowers climbing up a hazel tepee (you don't need much space — I grow them in old metal bins). Green beans of all kinds are properly delicious when you cook them for a long time, especially if they are no longer infant beans. It isn't true that they should always be bright green and al dente — they're nice that way when in their infancy, tossed in nothing more complicated than butter, salt and pepper, but the more mature green bean really benefits from slower cooking.

Here's a version of a delicious Ottolenghi recipe that makes runner beans ambrosial. Fry some onions over a gentle heat until they're soft, then add cumin seeds, chopped garlic and a little hot paprika and fry for a bit longer. Add a good squirt of tomato paste and cook that too. Then add chopped, de-stringed runner beans, fresh or tinned chopped tomatoes, salt and pepper and enough vegetable stock (I use a Knorr pot) to cover. Simmer with the lid on for half an hour, then take the lid off for another half-hour, until the sauce is thick and the beans soft. Eat with flatbreads: dinner.

Slower cooking aside, older runner beans — I mean those that are slightly too long and that you worry will be tough — also benefit from the application of serious heat. They've been around the block and there's no need to mollycoddle them. You can roast them whole: toss them in olive oil, season and put them in at 220C for about



KNIGHT'S TABLE Steenbergs Rose Water

I have started adding a tiny drop of rose water to strawberry and raspberry fools, though it's also lovely in softly whipped cream with chocolate cake. Rose waters vary to a peculiar extent. I like Steenbergs the best — it's just organically grown roses and water. £4.25 for 100ml, steenbergs.co.uk



Older runner beans benefit from serious heat. There's no need to mollycoddle them

15 minutes, or until the edges are slightly charred.

As with all roasted vegetables at this time of year — best cooked in one layer to keep them individual rather than amorously ratatouille-like — these are good and very low-effort sitting on a platter that you've smeared with either tahini sauce or labneh. Tahini sauce is about two big tablespoons of tahini mixed with one tablespoon of lemon juice (or to taste), a crushed garlic clove and some salt. Whisk together and add enough water to thin to a pourable consistency, though don't make

it too thin. It will go claggy at first, but keep whisking. Labneh is full-fat Greek yoghurt into which you stir a bit of salt and a glug of olive oil. Decant into a clean J-cloth, tie it up into a bundle, put it in a colander that you sit in a bowl, and leave to strain in the fridge overnight.

If you have a barbecue going, you can use that instead of a hot oven — just lay the runner beans on the grill and dress them in salt, pepper and your best olive oil once they're done. Or you can wok-fry them (use a shallow pan if you don't have a wok): heat some vegetable oil over high heat until it is



shimmering, then add your beans, which you have cut into quite large pieces at an angle, and some salt. Again, you're wanting the edges to catch and go brown. You can add ginger, garlic and chilli, or go in a vaguely Italian direction by cooking them with garlic and rosemary, or in a French one by tossing the cooked beans in butter and parsley.

If your runner beans are perky and youthful, steam or boil them and apply the same sorts of flavourings. The butter-and-parsley (plus salt and pepper) suggestion sounds extremely boring on paper but is lovely to eat. Ordinary green beans, ie not runners, are delicious like this too, and also with tarragon instead of parsley.

Incidentally, I have started finding marrows in my courgette bed — it is extraordinary how good they are at hiding, until one day there they are inescapably huge. The vast ones are unpleasantly watery, but the medium ones, the courrows or margettes, are pretty nice if you halve them, excavate some of their seedy middle and stuff them with your favourite bolognese recipe. Rub them in olive oil and roast them solo first, at about 200C, for 15-20 minutes or until they are just beginning to soften, then add your filling and give them another 20 minutes or so ■



D R I N K • Will Lyons

Go big and bold for a bank holiday barbecue

This weekend marks the high point of the summer barbecue season, with supermarket shelves around the country laden with sacks of charcoal and special offers of marinated kebabs and elaborately flavoured sausages. When it comes to what we should be drinking there isn't a handy one-size-fits-all solution but there are a few helpful guidelines, the principal one being to opt for wines with big, robust, pungent flavours that will pair well with strongly flavoured food and eating outdoors.

If you're barbecuing lots of rich meats, sausages, ribs, burgers, that sort of thing, I tend to recommend a deeply coloured, supple yet bold wine such as a malbec from Argentina or something smoky from Chile or South Africa. The spicy, black-fruited 2020 Undurruga Cauquenes Estate Carignan from Chile (The Wine Society, £9.95) slips down a treat, as does the full-bodied and supple 2021 Bruce Jack Shiraz from South Africa (Co-op, £7.35). The southern Rhône's easygoing grenache blends and the rich flavours of the reds from Portugal's Douro Valley, meanwhile, are always very welcome too. These wines can hold their own against the jumble of strong flavours on the plate.

But of course we often barbecue seafood, chicken and vegetables too. With these dishes I like to serve a chilled rosé, nothing too special. The easy-drinking and fruity 2022 Amandla Our Freedom

Blush (Sainsbury's, £9) fits the bill perfectly, as does a strongly aromatic sauvignon blanc such as Tesco's 2022 Finest Sauvignon Blanc, from South Africa (£8).

Oh, and if your barbecue sits on stone paving, like mine, Djuce's unbreakable wine glasses (£37 for four, djuce.com) are a must ■

2022 Co-op Spanish Garnacha Spain (14%)

Co-op, £6.15 A rich, rustic red that will slip down a treat with barbecued meats. Terrific value and a real find.

2022 22 Families Chenin Blanc South Africa (12.5%)

Marks & Spencer, £10 With excellent notes of tropical fruit, this would pair beautifully with a plate of sizzling chicken.

2022 Chosen by Majestic Rosé France (12.5%) Majestic,

£9.99 Here's a light, refreshing rosé bursting with floral and red fruit aromas. Ideal for gently sipping in the garden.

2021 Bariloche Malbec Argentina (13.5%) Laithwaites,

£12.99 The intense fruit of this Patagonian malbec makes it a supple accompaniment to a juicy chargrilled steak.

2020 Shiraz by Hewitson Australia (14%) Berry Bros & Rudd, £15.50

This is a smooth, stylish shiraz with blackcurrant flavour and a succulent, warming texture.

2021 Constitution Road Chardonnay South Africa (14%) Tesco, £17

Barbecued chicken and veg call for a chardonnay like this: it marries smoky notes with a citrus kick.

Bargain of the week

Eglise Saint-Jacques Bergerac France (13%) Tesco, £6.50 This merlot-based blend is a cracking buy, packed with ripe and supple dark fruit.



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To book your place at an Open Day please visit godolphinandlatymer.com

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Queen's Gate is a South Kensington day school for girls aged four to 18. They are a close-knit community with a mission to inspire each pupil to exceed their own potential.

They are proud of their outstanding results at GCSE and A-level; however, they have no 'one-size-fits-all' definition of success – for them, it's about fostering self-confidence and self-motivation. They can boast about their girls who compete at the international level in a range of sports and perform with the National Youth Orchestra and National Youth Theatre. They are outward looking,



with a commitment to charity that dates back to their foundation in 1891.

They are unashamedly proud of their aspirational mindset, generosity of spirit and commitment to originality. Queen's Gate's unique atmosphere can't really be appreciated until you step inside their buildings.



QUEEN'S GATE
SCHOOL

To book your visit, please contact their registrar, Mrs Ceili Roberts-Beresford, at registrar@queensgate.org.uk

Will your child be taking the 11+ or private school entrance exams?



AE Tuition equips children with the skills and knowledge to prepare for exams and future educational success.

Their one-year 11+ preparation courses are for pupils going into Year 3 to Year 5 in September, and will prepare students to sit verbal reasoning, non-verbal reasoning, mathematics and English examinations for grammar schools.

AE Tuition's Scholarship/Independent School course is for pupils going into Year 6 to Year 8 for late entry or Independent School exams. The course aims to take the child to a very high level of performance in English, maths and verbal reasoning. In many cases, a number of their students have achieved scholarships to an independent school.

Both AE Tuition's one-year 11+ and Scholarship/Independent School courses can be attended either in person at their tuition centres or remotely online.



To book or find out more about all of the courses AE Tuition offers, visit aetuition.co.uk

The art world at your fingertips

CHRISTIE'S | EDUCATION

This September, Christie's Education launches the next intake of its comprehensive series of online courses spanning the history of art from the 16th century to the present day. Taught by experts at the forefront of the industry, the flexible six-week courses – available in English and Chinese – have been created for art enthusiasts and those with career aspirations in the art world. Using an innovative, user-friendly online platform, students will access documentary-style learning guides, engaging interviews with art



market professionals and interact with their online tutors and classmates.

The curriculum encompasses luxury categories ranging from jewellery, watches, design and fashion to in-depth explorations of the history of art, including the great masters of European art. A brand-new course starting in October, 'Old Mistresses': Fame, Fortune and Female Artists 1500-1900, offers a unique and thought-provoking perspective on art history which challenges the traditional dominance of male artists at its core.



Embark on an unforgettable learning adventure with Christie's this autumn. Enter promo code Art15 for a 15% at discount education.christies.com/london-courses

The prestigious Budokwai Judo and Martial Arts Club



Opened in 1918 by the 'Father of British Judo,' Gunji Koizumi

Sensei, the Budokwai offers a range of classes for children and adults. Nurture your physical and mental wellbeing at one of Europe's oldest and most prestigious Judo and Martial Arts Clubs.

Their two dojos in the heart of Chelsea are home to Judo, which translates as 'the gentle way', from four years old; Shotokan Karate from six years; and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, Aikido,

Visit budokwai.co.uk to find out more.



Hontai Yoshin Ryu Ju-Jitsu, Yoga and Pilates from 16 years.

The Budokwai's Martial Arts instructors are all highly qualified, experienced and able to offer a range of coaching and instruction for the complete novice through to Olympic standard. Beginners are carefully taught techniques most suited to their ability and proceed up the grades towards the much-coveted Dan grade and Black Belt (discipline specific). The Budokwai look forward to welcoming you at GK House.

Achieving personal bests



Hurst College's overarching aim is to provide an excellent all-round education with a

strong academic core to allow every child, from four to 18 years, to achieve their own personal bests.

This thriving co-educational school, with a vibrant dynamic community, is located in the West Sussex countryside, within a 140-acre campus. Rated excellent in all areas of its ISI Inspection, Hurst offers flexi and weekly boarding from Year 9, an extensive bus service throughout Sussex, Surrey and Kent, plus a chaperoned weekly train service from Clapham Junction.

All pupils are enabled and challenged to make the most of their talents and the huge opportunities available. Hurst is ambitious for its pupils to achieve the best they can,



recognising engagement and achievement.

While understanding that the best possible academic grades are critical, Hurst believes the development of key skills, qualities and values that are so important in life come primarily from activities beyond the classroom. Alongside academic rigour – not instead of it – Hurst offers an ambitious sporting, cultural, intellectual and social co-curricular programme.

Hurst pupils are ambitious with a clear sense of purpose, a balanced view of life and develop into independent, mature individuals.

Book a personal visit by emailing admissions@hpsc.co.uk or book a place on the next open morning at hpsc.co.uk/open-mornings

Intelligently structuring your school fees planning

strabens hall...

Private education is a life-changing opportunity that parents or grandparents often aspire to provide for their family. Established in 2007, Strabens Hall have many years' experience in assisting families who are planning for the expense of private schooling. They are able to structure school

fee planning efficiently and effectively across multiple generations. Strabens Hall are completely independent, which enables them to advise clients comprehensively and without any conflicts of interest.

Please visit strabenshall.co.uk/Times or contact them on 020 7467 4444 for further details.



A LIFE IN THE DAY

Anita Rani

Countyfile and Woman's Hour presenter, 45

Born in Bradford, Rani studied broadcasting at Leeds University and started presenting for Channel 5 in 2002. Three years later she joined the BBC, contributing to a range of arts and news programmes before hosting the consumer rights show *Watchdog*. She has hosted *Countryfile* since 2015, the same year she reached the semi-final of *Strictly Come Dancing*, and in 2021 she joined the presenting team at *Woman's Hour*. Rani recently published her first novel, *Baby Does a Runner*. She lives in Hackney with her husband, Bhupinder Rehal, an advertising agency executive.

I'm a get-up-and-go, seize-the-day person. If I'm presenting *Woman's Hour*, which broadcasts from 10am, or I want to get some uninterrupted writing done, I'll get up at 5am. As I'm getting into gear, my husband is fast asleep, probably thinking, "Leave it to the nutter."

Before I do anything else I have a cup of hot water, which feels like a soothing way to hydrate. I'll follow it with a tea chaser, before doing a kickboxing class, which is mentally energising, or a run around nearby Hackney Marshes, soundtracked by Madonna, Belinda Carlisle and Cyndi Lauper.

Breakfast will be eggs. I do most of the planning for *Woman's Hour* the day before, so once I get to the studio at 6.30am, I'll go through the papers, have a production meeting, write my intro and then it's all systems go. When I first started I had serious



imposter syndrome and my nerves were always jangling the night before, but now I've found my groove and feel like I very much deserve to be there.

There have been some amazing moments, like interviewing Hillary Clinton, who was flanked by an entourage of headset-wearing secret service agents, and even more impressively, Masih Alinejad, the Iranian activist living in exile in the States, who arrived with so much security, including half of the Metropolitan Police. She was a tiny but powerful woman, and meeting her brought tears to my eyes.

If I'm writing at home, I work from a little dressing room/office. Creating the story for my

novel was a combination of my imagination and stuff inspired from my life; it's about a girl from Bradford, for starters.

It's funny — I hope — and it's about a British Asian woman discovering her true identity and dealing with the cultural pressure to be married and have children at a certain age.

Writing, and being in my mid-forties, have made me reappraise things in my life. I'm much better at self-care and I ask myself more questions about how I want to live my life.

I'm also more willing to be vulnerable, like talking about the miscarriage I had in 2018. Vulnerability used to scare the shit out of me, but it has been liberating to share my personal story and see the response.

Woman's Hour usually wraps by 1pm. If I'm not filming *Countryfile*, I might go for a meal with a mate, but if I'm shooting it will probably just be a sandwich, a KitKat and crisps.

I once interviewed Dame Judi Dench at her house for *Countryfile*, and after the chat she asked me what I like to drink. I said, "Well, we're both from Yorkshire, it's got to be champagne," and we had lunch together with a bottle of champagne, which was a magical moment for me. She's such a brilliant raconteur and charming, cheeky company.

I'm known on set as a bit of a social media addict. I look like Dom Joly walking around with my phone in the air trying to find a signal. I'm very much an Instagram girl. I find Twitter exhausting. If I come across someone being racist or misogynistic, that triggers me. I'll retweet their offensive tweet and watch the army of good people pile in on my behalf.

Once work is done, I love cooking, and carbs are my go-to. Nothing beats some spicy pasta and a bottle of red wine. I aim to be in bed by 10pm, as I rise so early. Once I've read the next day's briefs, I switch off instantly and sleep like a log ■

Interview by Nick McGrath. *Baby Does a Runner* by Anita Rani (Zaffre £14.99). Buy at timesbookshop.co.uk. Special discount for Times+ members

WORDS OF WISDOM

Best advice I was given

Playing pool with my dad at 15, he told me to remember that the game is never over until the black ball is down, so just keep bloody going for it

Advice I'd give

The best is yet to come

What I wish I'd known

Trying to please everybody is a pointless pursuit. Spend more time concentrating on making yourself happy



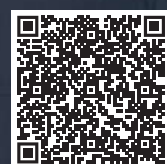
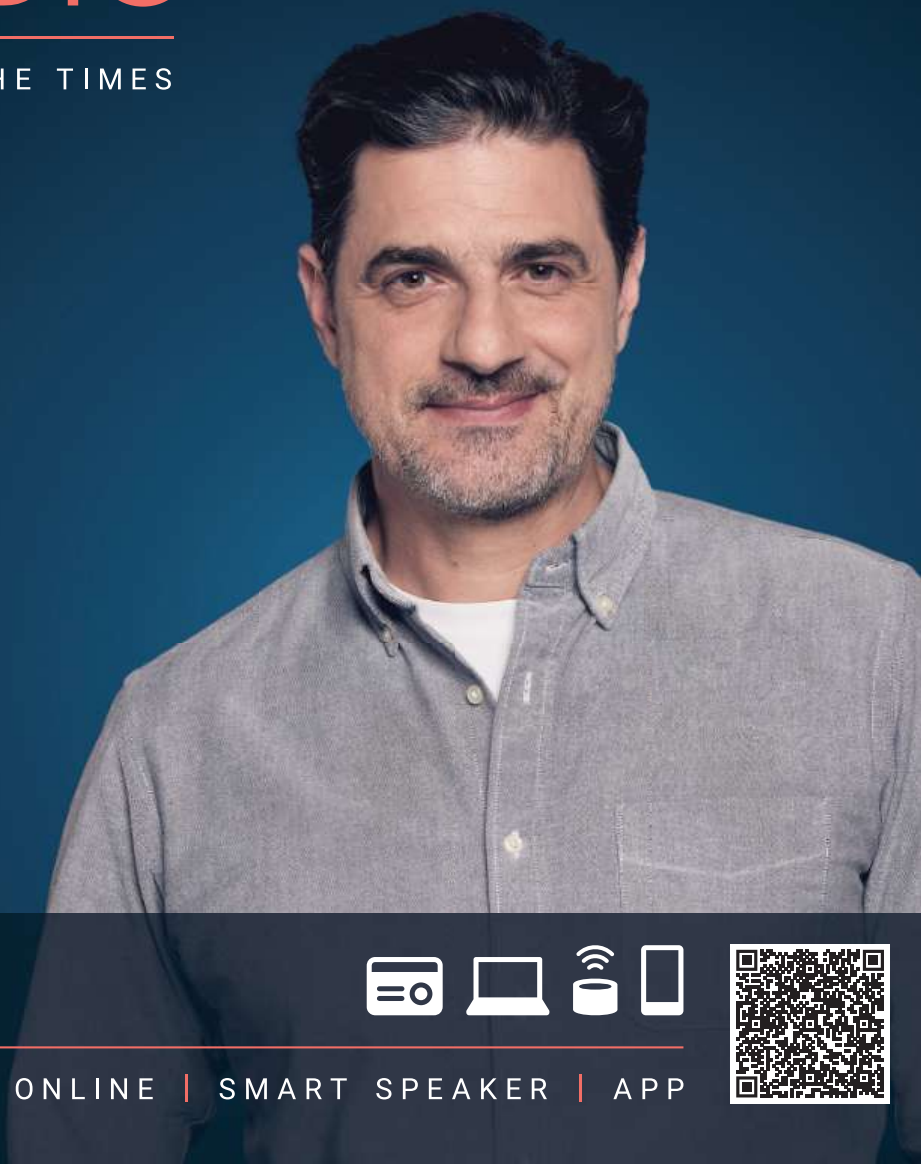
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Porsche Taycan GTS official WLTP combined energy consumption 23.3 – 20.3 kWh/100km, combined CO₂ emissions 0 g/km. Figures shown are for comparability purposes only and may not reflect real life driving conditions, which will depend upon a number of factors including any accessories fitted, variations in weather, topography and road conditions, driving styles, vehicle load and condition, and state of battery charge.